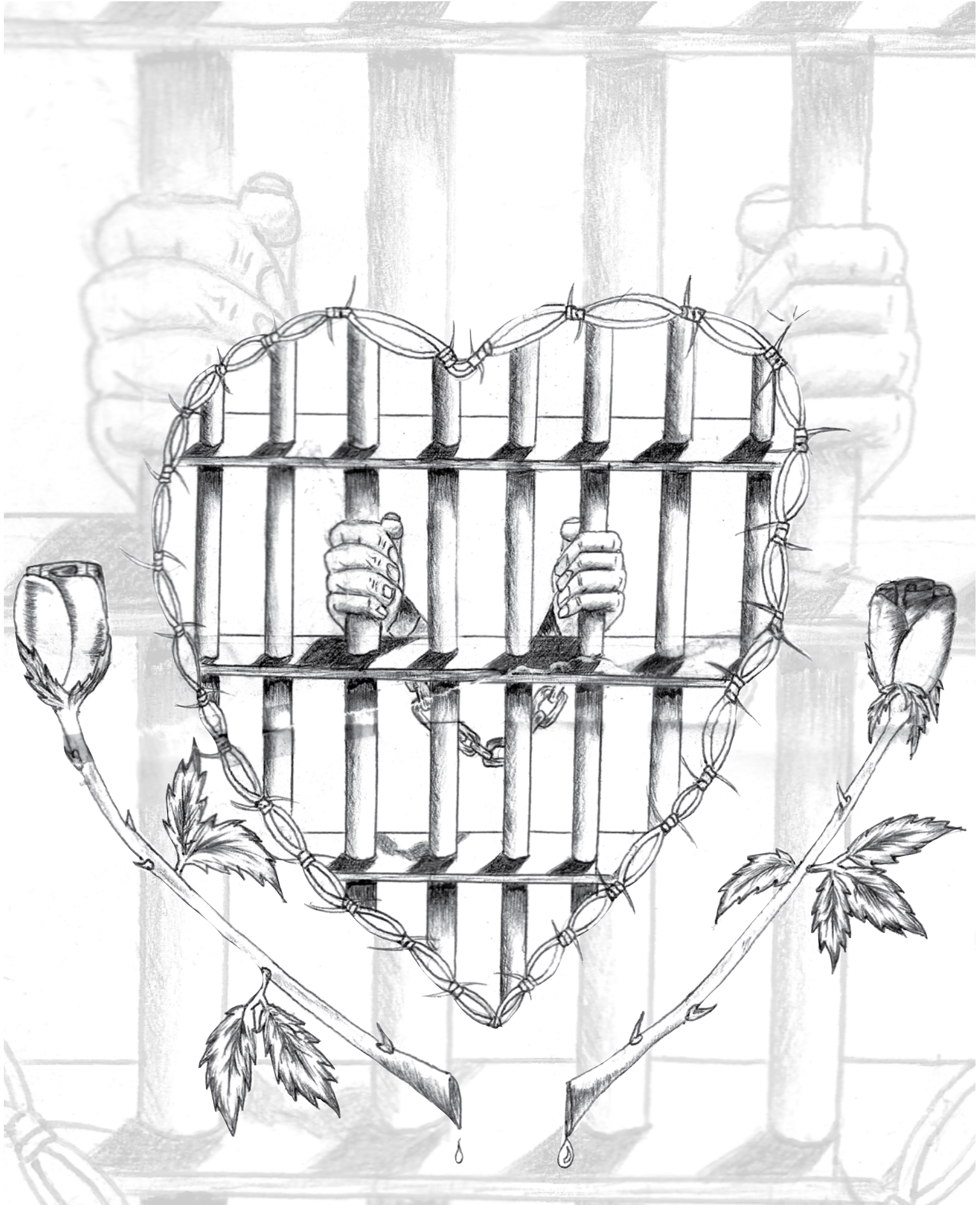


The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN • A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE • VOLUME 12.41



We were going through our archives and came across a letter written to us by one of the best writers to ever write for The Beat and a person who we miss incredibly, Michael Markhasev. At the time of this letter he was incarcerated in Corcoran State Prison's SHU, but we don't know where he is now (we're assuming the same place) because we haven't heard from him in a while. However after stumbling across his letter we wanted to publish it in an editor's note for two reasons. The first is one we've already stated and that's because we miss his words and literary presence in The Beat Without section, and two, because it is a true testament to why we do this work. His appreciation and gratitude is the kind that keeps and operation such as The Beat going week in and week out. This letter was featured in The Beat exactly five years ago (in issue 7.41). We'll share some more thoughts in a minute but right now we're giving the floor to an extraordinary man and a very brilliant writer.

Dear Beat Within

Greetings to you and God bless! Indeed, it was truly a big blessing and an honor to hear from you. Thank you very much for your words of encouragement, and as I've stated before, perhaps the greatest honor of all is the fact that I got published and that my words were able to shed some light on someone's path. Even a single life is by far more precious than all the prizes in the world.

I enjoy reading [The Beat] whenever it comes my way. However, I have to admit that often times it leaves me sad and with a melancholy heart. There are many reasons for this, just as there are many sad entries, written by the youth and adults alike, who appear on the pages of The Beat.

As I browse through the pages and read, I can't help it but see myself in many of the entries: the way I used to think, behave and understand things to be. And considering where all of that bona fide street wisdom has brought me, one shouldn't laugh but instead weep crocodile tears because, unfortunately and regrettably, many of those who appear in The Beat today will be receiving their CDC numbers tomorrow or worse, being buried due to an untimely death on American streets.

Yes, it is sad and very serious, but, thankfully, not at all hopeless. Also in The Beat I see those rare (yet always present) sparks of hope: old and young alike who seek something better than this here, something more worth and meritorious than some block or project or neighborhood where they don't even own the sidewalk yet for which many others are ready and willing to be killed or to kill others. How good it is to see such pieces, rays of sunshine in the midst of darkness, hopelessness and tragic ignorance (of which many of us have been partakers, to our own hurt).

Perhaps I may not agree with many of the contributors who bang on the system, yet fail to see their own failures or destructive ways, or support those who wishfully and quite naively condemn punishment as though all inmates and prisoners are misunderstood innocent little lambs who have been led astray by that nasty, wicked, corrupt MAN IN CHARGE. But still, people are people, each with their own view and desire, so one has to extract that which is good and leave the rest alone. The world, in general, is an extremely wicked, corrupt place, so any good is always welcome.

It's great that The Beat is an attempt to give the youth some breathing room and to allow them to do something other than devise mischief all day or read those bogus books that stack the shelves of juvenile facilities. May you not get discouraged if no obvious results are seen, because it's known that some seeds take longer to sprout than others (and I say this from my own experience). May the Lord bless you in your work and strengthen you!

Also, please know that you also are an encouragement, simply because you welcome those whom the rest of society shuns as evil, parasites and low-lives. I thank you for that.

I'm just a regular Joe who got his GED in a juvenile camp, no more. Everything that I have, whether it be my breath or ability

to write, comes from God almighty. I'm merely a pot in the hands of the potter. One thing that I'm able to say that I have learned in the past two-to-three years is **TO THINK**, to actually **THINK** and analyze things for myself and not merely accept what someone says. It's never a one-way story, or even a two-way, so if one hopes to get to the truth of the matter, all prejudices, emotions, special interests have to be left behind. Until that is done, until the heart is open to love — which discriminates not, nor is biased — truth will be absent from the grasp. The Bible says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. And now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Amen.

Til next time, and yes, there will most definitely be a next time. God willing, within weeks I'll put something together.

Take care. Sincerely, with devotion, from Corcoran with love!

We're spreading the word about The Beat in our unit, here in the SHU unit.

And so you have it, words of wisdom from a tremendously wise man. In fact, this editor had the privilege of debating with Michail and it was definitely a learning experience because even though this editor was being stubborn and closed minded, Michail dropped some knowledge and in retrospect cleared everything up. He's a very powerful writer that brings up a great point in his letter. He says he sees himself in the entries of the youngsters. He sees how he used to be. And then he ends with a Bible passage: "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. And now abides faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Which really hit home for us because there are some men that still do childish things, but all in all that's the truth. When we're young, we do foolish things by default, sort of the trial and error process of life, but when we get older we should pretty much know where we stand in the world. We should at least be aware of the foolish things we did in the past and be aware of our surroundings so we know where we're going. For if not, we're probably continuing the same destructive cycles that give consequences we've experienced before. And where's the learning in experiencing the same pain over and over again. We appreciate Michail and hope he's doing well. If he reads this, we hope he'll at least send a letter to ease our worry. And now on to the logistical portion of this editor's note.

All right readers, this weeks topics are "Giving A Speech About Who You Are..." - Think about this: if you were to give a speech about who you are today comparing it to who you were before you got locked up, what would you say? We know many of you have changed and there are some who haven't, but no matter what, you are different now than you were before you got locked up. You've experienced more, you've had more conversations with more people, and you might have even learned more. Take the stage and give your speech about who you are TODAY...

The second topic, "The Mean Friend" - What is it about them, our mean friends? They treat us badly, they don't call us back, they cancel plans at the last minute, and yet we come back for more. Popular bullies exist in business, politics, everywhere. How do they stay so popular? Why do they remain our friends? Tell us about your mean friend and why you think this person is so mean? If you do not have a mean friend, then tell us what you think makes a person mean?

Last but not least, "How Do Your Moods Change You?" - Do you ever notice that the mood that you're in, influences how you get along with the world? How do you react differently to people, depending on how you feel? How does your family, your homies, friends respond to you, depending on the emotions you're putting out there? Write a story for The Beat about how you responded to a somebody or a situation, because you were in one mood, and how you might have behaved differently if you'd been in another mood?

OK from this editor, we wish you an informative journey through out pages this week. We look forward to hearing from you all in the coming weeks. Thanks again readers and writers for taking the time to read and of course pass along this gem we all have come to respect, The Beat Within.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

Co-founders: Sandy Close and David Inocencio

Senior Editors: David Inocencio

Assistant Editors: Michael Kroll, Will Roy

Graphics/Layout Editor: Manen Pau

Staff: Pauline Craig, Jill Wolfson, Allan Tinker, Patricia Johnson, Amanda Ables, Omar Turcios, Dennis Morton, Sheerly Avni, Jennifer Clarke, Brittany Bernard, Perry Jones, Tal Ariel, Margo Ariel Brockman, Catalina Hayes-Bautista, Elizabeth Crawford, Marina Saenz, Monica Carlos, Allan Boe, Brenda Navarro, Allan Martinez, Morghan Velez Young, Siliva Mortenson, Neela Banerjee and Caitlin Urie.

The Maricopa County, Phoenix, Arizona, Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Joe Szulecwski, M.A., Lisa Donsker, M.C., Hillary Shluker, M.C., Lisa Karczewski, M.A. The detention staff are: Tammie Utter, Shannon Lechner, D. Scott Herrmann, Ph.D. Clinical Director.

Bernalillio County, New Mexico "The Land of Enchantment" Juvenile Probation Department Beat Staff: Steve Serna

Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth Involvement – Getting young people involved in decision making efforts requires that location, schedules and communication style be geared toward young people's lifestyles. Especially to access the ideas of young people who have had mixed experiences with the system or grew up in poverty, financial compensation for attendance demonstrates the value of their time spent on this effort to improve services for the larger community.

Families as the Unit of Service – Participants felt that mental health services and support were needed for their whole family, not just them as individuals, if they were to succeed in staying healthy and achieving their goals. When young people are in group homes or incarcerated, families need the system to help siblings and parents stay connected.

Innovative Therapy – Participants repeatedly complained that schools and juvenile halls are understaffed with counselors, and that therapy and programs should be made available to young people before they get in trouble, not just after the fact. Concrete suggestions for building trust between therapists and youth clients include informing young people about their rights in dealing with the system, identifying a young person's survival needs as a starting point in therapy and monitoring strengths and goals, not just mistakes, in young people's case files.

No Medication without Communication – The overwhelming feedback about psychotropic medications is that young people are not getting good communication from doctors about their meds. They asked for more controls on dosages and checks and balances to make sure medications are treating the real problem, accompanied by talk therapy, and not being used to make young people's problems easier for adults to manage. Funds could be used for follow-up services after youth are released from detention or placement, to ensure they continue receiving care and don't turn to street drugs or self-destructive behavior.

Prepare Adults to Support & Respect Youth – Participants expressed concern that the adults taking care of them were

From The Beat: We've been way busy these days and we almost forgot about this final installment from our good friends over at the CCYR (California Council on Youth Relations). Yes indeed we published the first installment in Beat issue 12.37. We are thrilled to include the following pieces from young people who met with CCYR and wrote from Fresno, Los Angeles, Oakland, Daly City and San Francisco responding to the question, "When I needed it most." Once again we would like to thank Patricia Johnson and all her colleagues, especially the young people who put the pencil to the paper and wrote on the topic.

not properly trained or supported in dealing with heavy emotions or trauma-induced behaviors. They suggested free therapy for staff, teachers, social workers, judges, case workers, foster parents and therapists working with stressed out young people; and more required trainings for staff and foster parents. They also wanted the system to provide more support for young people as adults change positions and move through their own careers, as well as supplementing therapy with mentorship programs that match young people with role models who have been through similar experiences.

A Place to Go, Something to Do – Participants in the focus groups repeatedly asked for youth centers and jobs that provide a safe environment and a sense of purpose. Participants asked that mental health funds be used for youth-driven recreational spaces that offer a chance to impact the community and support physical fitness. They also saw job training and placement as important to prevention of self-destructive behaviors caused by poverty, lack of purpose and too much free time.

Engage Stigma - Mental health providers face the dual challenge of social stigma about mental health combined with the distrust young people have for adults in positions of authority. Participants requested free or subsidized therapy or support groups for parents of children diagnosed with mental illness. And they felt hiring young people to do outreach at schools and CBOs about mental health resources, what therapy is like, support hot lines, etc., would empower youth to access resources.

TOPIC RESPONSES.... "When I Needed It Most..."

-Patricia Johnson, Development Director

Funds could be used for follow-up services after youth are released from detention or placement, to ensure they continue receiving care and don't turn to street drugs or self-destructive behavior.

The California Council on Youth Relations Intro

In the Spring of 2007 the State Department of Mental Health came to us for help finding out what kinds of mental health services young people like, don't like, want, don't want, need, don't need... so The Beat's sister project "The California Council on Youth Relations" organized focus groups with young people in eight California cities to find out. At these focus groups, in addition to a long discussion and yummy dinner, was a Beat-inspired writing topic, "When I needed it most..." and in these Beat pages you can read their interesting and unique responses to that topic.

We are pleased to announce that our final report, which contained over 25 policy recommendations from young people, was rubber-stamp-approved by the head of the Department of Mental Health on October 2, 2007!

This was a groundbreaking partnership between a state agency and local CBOs to get youth input into policy decision making. We're including a summary of the major recommendations here, but you can read the whole report online at "media.youthoutlook.org/ccyr.html". If you want to learn more about the project, feel free to contact Patricia Johnson at pjohnson@newamericamedia.org or by mail: 275 Ninth St, San Francisco, Ca 94103.

-Patricia Johnson, Development Director

What I Want

Don't you see me crying inside?
I'm slowly dying.
I've been beaten, raped and abused.
You're the adult,
Maybe you being a real dad will come through.
But people in hell want ice water too.

-April in Fresno

Faith In Myself

I felt like a ghost!
No one to talk to, no one to tell my sorrows to!
Looking for someone to understand me...
I feed on society!
Turning to methamphetamine to hold me ...
... It also deceived me!
Suddenly,
I've had enough
I won't give up.
Fighting my addictions and people's contradictions...
There is hope; there is a way to cope.
No dope, nope I'm NOT GIVING UP.
I see the light of opportunity shining on me!
When I need it most...
I found faith in myself!

-Sanjuanita in Fresno

When I Needed It Most...

There was that one person I knew I could turn to.
She was my hero.
She was my enemy.
She was always there.
She always cared.

When I needed it most...
She wouldn't turn her back
She would love and support me
She would encourage me
She would be an amazing role model

When I needed it most...
All her words would be right.
All her advice would be helpful.
All her soothing techniques would work.

So I want to thank God because

When I needed it most...
He gave me my mother

-Cassie in Fresno

When I Needed It Most

I got nothing, because if I would tell the truth you wouldn't do anything anyways so why should I need something from someone who don't have anything but negativity to give?

When I needed it most you threw sh** in my face. You had it in the palm of your hand and teased me with it. When I needed it most you weren't there, and now I've died so I don't need it anymore.

-Jevon in Los Angeles

There For Me

When I needed it the most nobody was there. Since I was 6 yrs old my Grandpa told me, "Mija, in this life you don't have anyone. There's no mom, there's no friends, the only person you truly have is yourself."

Coming in the foster care & mental health system I was told that I did have people. My therapist told me to trust her. My social worker said she was not like the others. My district Attorney looked like he was interested in me.

Everything changed when I turned 18 years old. All of a sudden I didn't have anyone. I found myself homeless. I didn't care any more; I was so lonely like I've never felt in my whole life.

I watched T.V., ate, went to work and school, but nobody called and nobody cared. All I remembered was what my grandfather said. That I only had myself. That day I decided that I was responsible for myself. No more blaming because I had a rat life and bad childhood, no more blaming to anyone. No more blaming my actions because I'm not going to therapy or taking my crazy meds. I decided to take action on my life; I would take responsibility for my own actions. It was up to me to go forward or down the hill.

When I need it the most nobody was there, just myself.

-Martha in Fresno

Helping Myself

I trust the most when Angels fly by my side. They are the most wonderful people in the entire world. Their group of people are the best. They help me help myself. They give me support. They listen to everything that someone has to say. They will go out of their way to help you in any way that they could possibly do. You never have to doubt them.

Helping yourself is helping the earth and helping the earth is helping yourself. Show the world that you can do anything that you set your mind to. Never give up on your dreams and hopes. Everything is possible, just don't give up, keep your head straight no matter what.

-Liliana in Los Angeles

I Needed Love

I needed love.
Love to feel protected though I was already hurt.
I needed love when I was raped.
Though I was already scared with this pain.
I needed love the most when I was stuck in the system.
Stuck with worries, stuck all alone.

I needed the love, the love of a mother.
Love that every child needs.
I didn't have it, it wasn't there.
Now I'm 19 years old making it on my own,
I don't need it and I don't want it anymore.
I won't have it and don't want it.
I discovered a new love,
love that will never fade away,
the love of a brother that will always stay the same.
I need that now and that's an everyday love
that will help me when I need it the most.

-Stacy in Los Angeles

To The Top

The life I lead is up to me
The past is the past, only the future I see
Don't tell me I'm nothing
Or going nowhere
I'm going somewhere
I'm going to the top
And I won't see you there

-Lyssa in Los Angeles

Working For My Dream

All I got to say is I know I been through a lot of stuff throughout my life. From drugs to guns. People abusing me, talking bad about me, praying for my down fall. Going from home to home and getting situated all over again in that foster home. And bad influences that taught me bad things, and me not getting caught because I know I is slick like dat.

When I see all these people with their nice cars and nice houses, nice jewelry on, all I do is say, "Man one of these days I am going have that dream car and dream house and jewelry." But I need to be doing something so I can reach those goals, and my past shouldn't be the excuse that stops me from getting to those dreams. All I got to do is put in work, and I could do almost anything I put my mind on, man!!!! Life is a b, but it can change, and I'm willing to change and become a better person.

-James in Fresno

What I Didn't Get

I didn't get help, love, attention, comfort, forgiveness, an apology, treatment, an answer, prayers, a hug, a kiss, some sort of affection, chosen, left alone, invited, understood, believed in, told the truth, cared about, a friend, a brother, a sister, a mom, a dad, anyone at all who knew I existed. It's funny...You get everything you don't need when you don't need it and nothing you need when you need it.

-Existing in Los Angeles

Ideal World

Ideal world, who could create that?
Is it you? Or is it I?
Is it you and I both?
Ideal world, what would it be?
Would it be fun? Or would it be sad?
Maybe it would make me cry.
Ideal world, when will it be?
Will it be now? Or will it be tomorrow?
What, who, when will it be an ideal world?
A world where everyone could just be.
Ideal world, is it a lie?
Or is it a fantasy that lives in my mind?
Would you like mine?
No? Then don't live in it!
Ideal world, live it!
Ideal world, make it!
Ideal world, dream it!

Do you want to be part of that ideal world?
Then come and join me 'cause we both can make our
ideal world a reality,
a dream come true!

-Bamby in Los Angeles

Motivating Myself

I feel like even though I am the product of my parents I refuse to follow in their footsteps. I am my own person, and only I can motivate myself to get out of the situations that I face daily.

-Motivated in Los Angeles

Where I Stand

When I needed it most the one most important thing to me was that the family all wanted me to succeed and become someone. They all believe in me, push me, enforce my life on me. I've always lived in a room of darkness, but this time they are my light to the way out. The one thing that I have realized through time is I am the only thing that stands in between where I am and where I want to be.

-Joseph in Los Angeles

What I Really Needed

When I needed it most I couldn't get a response.
Speaking for those who are physically absent,
but somewhere in the world did exist.

Started to get tired of this game we call life
Behind this mask there is a face.

A combined recipe

A vital ingredient

Of the human race.

He said, and she said

They would always be there

But like a unsolved crime

He, her, she, and him

Disappeared without a trace.

But one day I woke up
And reality welcomed me into existence
And I didn't care who didn't want to listen
When I look back on life it wasn't me who was the fool
It was the one who was given the job of helping me

But didn't have the proper tools

Because truly helping someone

That degree don't matter

Who you know don't matter

How much you have don't matter

You point of view don't matter

What matters is the belief system.

It's faith that matters.

Hope that matters.

The will to listen that matters.

Not the money in you bank account

But the willingness

To sacrifice the best investment in the world

A duty and service to help those who look like you and me

And I'm not talking about looking through the eyes of society

When I needed it most

I found it today.

Self love

Self sacrifice

Self appreciation

Self dedication

Self respect.

That's what I needed most.

-Eva in Los Angeles

America's Priorities

People call America this super-power. Say America is this good country where there is no reason for us to be unhappy. Unfortunately this is not the reality. Many teens, like myself, live below the poverty line. Our main concern is not the type of car we'll get but where will we get our next meal from. We have all this money to fuel wars based on personal vendettas and lies, but not enough money for education, more shelters, drop-in centers and healthcare affordable by all.

-Ashley in Los Angeles

Getting Help And Making Choices

When I needed it most was when I did not have a family that I could lean on. When I could only cope with drugs. When I thought I wanted to end my life. When I made that choice that my life was going the wrong way from what my family wanted. I didn't want to be the one on drugs working at the local burger stop at the age of 30. I sought help through other people. I found that I wasn't the only one out there. I turned my life around with the help of jail, CSW, and group homes. Now I make choices in my own life, without the choices being made for me. That's when I needed it most.

-Donald in Los Angeles

Other Families

My family wasn't there and I felt lonely, depressed. But I found a family that showed me love and that cared for me. It was my best friend's mom and my sisters and brother.

-Jocelyn in Los Angeles

Missing You

On the calendar
I scratch off another day
it doesn't matter what's the day.
Every day's the same,
Another empty day
the emptiness just stays
stuck inside me
where my heart once was
until it was torn from me.
If only you were here

-Lyssa in Los Angeles

Pray To The Streets

As I creep through the night, nowhere to be found, nowhere in site, trees shadowing over me, ducking and dodging so no one can see me. I am the reason why it is the way it is. Having to watch myself every step of the way, but that's how it is growing up on these streets of LA, where you hear gun shots ring off at least once a day, so you hope and pray you don't turn the TV on and see another teen laying on the floor. I give words of encouragement yet again, I pray to the lord please don't let it happen again. I'm a man of God but I don't think He is listening, so I am praying to the streets saying please don't let it happen to me or nobody else yet again.

-Deshawn in Los Angeles

Changing The World

I couldn't tell you cause I didn't have a phone. I needed it the most when you saw me crying lying in bed. The next day I got out of bed, went to school facing a bad day. Can it be that it was my destiny? It's not a coincidence that I found my voice the day of my daughter's birthday.

Today was the last day to lay in bed to wake up sad ready for a bad day. Tomorrow I work to build the real world that my child will share, not only with me, but all society. I began a fight that enforces my rights and no one can tell me to sit back, shut up, and "Let me read you your rights." No I stand up and fight repping that streets on my back, yell the chant as I walk down 50 miles spitting out, "Shut down the CYA!"

Today is the last day that no soldier in my hood of LA bends down and prays without a homie by to say hi. For everyone locked up, this is your last day to say without a voice cause I pray. Your health is ready to be free even if your body can't be. Today is the day that we all ay fight back and shut down CYA.

-Noe in Los Angeles

A Good Listener

When I need it most is when I need help, cause most of us can't do it ourselves. We can some do some of it, but when it comes to emotional part I need help cause I believe that my feelings get in the way. I know that what we need most is good listener.

-Avanna in Los Angeles

Stand Up

When I needed it most it wasn't there
So from coast-to-coast I began to share
the love I didn't have for myself with others
being beat by my mother and my brother
postin' up with thugs and indulging in drugs
another homie passes and people shrug
all the corrupt cops swept it all under the rug
because hoodlums to them just ain't good enough
so why give a fluff

Might as well just put 'em in cuffs
but I call their bluffs
and stand up against what they stand for.

I personally won't take it anymore
they don't deserve to earn money off me
I have such animosity towards the system
when they continue to destroy our youth
and throw us in prisons
in every form and fashion.

I have such compassion
for the prevention and intervention
for the next generation
help us to see they're killing off our brothers
different races but in the same places
wrapped up in murder and robbery
when we're all in poverty.

So I say give hugs f drugs
hustle legally and prove you're not just thugs.
You mean something
ya ain't nothing
and with the love from up above
you will see your destiny.

-Melissa in Los Angeles

In Juvie

When I needed it the most is when I was in juvenile hall. I needed help and guidance. I needed somebody to talk to. I needed somebody to understand me, and where I was coming from. I needed somebody to tell me to have motivation to move forward instead of moving backwards.

-Lady in Oakland

My Father Wasn't There

When I needed it the most was when I was a young child. My father, he was never there. He was always asleep because of the drugs. When I needed his advice he just ignored me. When I needed his help he just brushed me and took more pills. When he was on the pills he was abusive. He would strike me for no reason just to see me cry. I still have love for my father but not as much as I wish I had.

-James in Los Angeles

Then And Now

When I needed it most people laugh in my face & brag & boast. When I needed it most people left me behind to rot in one self conscious mind. Growing up, no guidance for a young street thug so I turn to gang-banging, drug slangin' and turn to my homies for love. Now I look back and regret what I did. I grew up hard but still want the best for my kids. Why I want to change is so I'm not looking over my shoulder because that's no way to live.

-Wanting the Best in Los Angeles

Help From Family

I need my family support for they can tell me that I can do it and that they love me.

-Loved in Los Angeles

I Wish

What I needed most was my real dad, 'cause I would be able to talk to him about things that he went through and I would be able to express my thoughts with him.

-Wishing in Los Angeles

Things Could Have Been Easier

When I was becoming a young teen I felt I really needed my father or my mother and I didn't have none, so for me growing up it was different. It seemed like everybody around me had somebody telling them something...So that left me feeling like a lost child waiting to be saved. That's when my mother got out of jail. I wish I could say the same about my father who passed away in my earlier days of life, actually when I was six or seven years old.

If I only had that guidance in my life at that moment I feel it would have made me a better person. But hey, I can't complain. If it wasn't for what happened, I wouldn't be where I am at today, so I don't really have no regrets. But I could say things would of been a lot easier, especially for me.

-Devin in San Francisco

Sub-Survival

I was cornered, alone, and afraid. Cornered in a world that is round. Alone in a home filled with family. Afraid of individual success. Trying to make sense of this madness on top of their material stress. Scrapped just begins to describe me. Unstable homes, unstable minds, in this city what's left to find? Shattered dreams, and broken homes and you ask us why we run and hide. It's our only method to sub-survive.

But that's done cause we're trying! Don't believe me just try it. Call on us, cause in LA we don't rally we riot!

-Rainbow in Los Angeles

Just Want To Be Me

I want everything to be my way
I want to be accepted by everyone
I want to be successful in my life

I want to travel the world and the seven seas
I want to fall from a mountain and never reach the ground and feel the earth's air in my face.
I want to do so many things that I can't name them all.
I want to live a long life (die old with someone by my side)

I want to explore so many things I haven't yet.
I want to sit down and think about all the wonderful times in my life I have been through.
I just want to be me, Ruby, and no one else.

-Ruby in Los Angeles

What I Needed Get And What I got

At a young age I needed a better neighborhood, because living in Hunter's Point there was a lot of factories and liquor stores. I needed a therapist that could really understand me and that I could compare my life to. I feel like I needed a better father figure. Family support with alcoholism and how it affects everyone's life, like me being addicted to medication and having asthma. I needed better housing.

When I was younger I lived in a shelter in the Fillmore; it looked like a jail. They only good thing was that I had an art room where all the kids would come in and we would make art.

-Stephany in San Francisco

Mama

I am all alone, not physically but emotionally. When I needed you the most you were not there. It's not your fault, but it is. You are not to blame, but you are. The life you chose separated me from you. When I needed my heart you had it with you. When I needed to know, you didn't tell me the truth. All day I would wait and you wouldn't come. My mama, my heart, my love, all I ever wanted, all I ever needed.

And now that I have you, I've lost so much. I've sacrificed so much. I moved to a scary place known as the hood. Black kid that is white washed, learning as I go along. Being raised in both worlds is the reason why I am strong. When I needed you you would flake. So I realized me needing you is what made me fake.

-Bobby in San Francisco

Different Kinds Of Friends

I had my friend to be there to support me and go through it all. I turned to tweak and thought I had everything.

-A Friend in Los Angeles

Supported and Not Supported

When I need help most it's rarely there. When I really needed money, I didn't have it, so I would end up doing something negative like selling something or robbing someone for it. When I really needed my family, they always seemed close enough to take me out of that negative situation. But support was never there, so there was no positive drive in doing good in school. It's like I have doubts because it's really up to yourself to make things happen.

-Independent in San Francisco

Right in Front of Me

What I needed most...A chance

What I needed most...A voice

What I needed most...A purpose

What I needed most...A Life

What I needed most...An ear

What I needed most...To regroup my thoughts

What I needed most it was all in front of me

I couldn't feel it nor hear it, it wasn't what the eyes could see, but what the heart could feel it was standing there with open arms, but I was blinded by the misconception and a past problem which was out of my control. I dwelled on a piece of life which did not hurt me only taught me a lesson of wisdom...

What I needed most...God blessed me with

What I needed most was the pain

What I needed most was the trouble

What I needed most was the struggle

What I needed most and what I got was a lesson to be learned...and now is a lesson to be taught.

God blessed me with the tools to make it through my life.

What I needed most... was right in front of me

-Troubled in San Francisco

Life Was Killing Me

When I needed it the most you laughed in my face. You called me crazy and looked at me like I was stupid. All I ever wanted was someone to listen. But then when you did all you could say was, "Change the subject, you not on my level." But I didn't want you to listen to compare me; I just wanted you to listen.

When I needed it the most, your attention was to your new boyfriend. Mom, you weren't seeing why I acted that way. I was doing drugs not because I was just another troubled teen. But you were just another troubled mother. Any time I felt happiness was when I was kickin' it and too high to remember. When I needed it the most I started to think I really was crazy. But then reality hit me. I started to feel like I wasn't livin' life but life was killing me. Sometimes I wish I can't hear and see, so for one day I can live in peace, but I'm human, trapped in my body.

But it's cool I don't blame you anymore. I'm older now and can take responsibility for my own actions. You ain't my problem now.

-Christina in Sacramento

By My Side

There was nobody there for me. On Friday it's my prom and I'm not going be able to go. When I needed it most, that's when it seemed like nobody was by my side. The only thing that made me happy was that I saw my mother.

-Lonely in Oakland

Going Under

When I needed it most I didn't have nothing. Man, I came out the womb struggling. Everyday of my life had your boy hustling. We all corrupted as we speed to our own decision,

But we not running. So we smoking and popping stunners

Do what we want till everything pull us under.

-Under in Sacramento

How Foster Care Could Help

When I needed my mom and dad the most they weren't there for me. When I needed my family the most they weren't there for me. But I think that everybody in life has somebody in life who could help. It doesn't really have to be their biologically family.

What I think is that the foster care system needs to help children more by spending time with them. They need to give the children some time. They only see the bad part of the kids but not the good side. What I thing is that the foster kids need more opportunity to do stuff like when they get out of the system they should help them find a place to live and with a job. Everybody in life needs an opportunity,

-Elida in San Diego

By Your Side

When I needed you the most you were somewhere locked up.

When I needed you the most you were somewhere banging.

When I needed you the most you were somewhere doing drugs & drinking.

When I needed you the most you were running the streets

& didn't come back till almost the next morning.

Now you're in group home, where I never see you cuz you're far away.

It really hurts to see you like this living in a house full of strangers & no one to talk to. Not only you, but my sister, but you were also my best friend.

If I could, in time, I would help you stay out of trouble and make you realize that there is

so much more to life than running away, banging, and doing drugs.

I wish that one day you will realize all of those things

& when you do turn 18 I hope you make the right choices

& learn from the mistakes you made.

I wanna let you know I will be there by your side when you do.

-Hurting in Sacramento

Thank You

You was there to listen. You was there to feel where I was coming from, to talk to me and be there. When I needed something and you had it, you gave, and I love you for that. You was even there on my best days. When we didn't have nothing to do you always came up with something stupid to do. So thank you for being there when I needed it most.

-Thankful in Oakland

God Was There

When I need it most I was in tears.
When I needed it God was there.
When I needed it the most...
To pass my fears for many years.
Amen.
God Bless.

-Antonio in San Francisco

A Black Cloud

You weren't there. You were somewhere drinking a beer. As I lay in bed crying all night a ghost in my window also cries. I look to my left, and a black cloud talks to me saying, "Wake up, mom and dad are not home, let's blow some dope." Five cats under my bed they give me peace.

-Crowder in San Francisco

Where Were You?

Like a fish with no water,
A baby with no milk
Young teen mother all alone
No love, morals or guidance
Where were you when I needed you most?

-Teen Mom in Oakland

Guess What? You Wasn't There For Me

What I needed the most was for the homies to be there for me, but it feels like when I am down nobody wants to care for me. Now I'm all lonely thinking about how I was just with the homies, now ya gone, life feels so phony. It's ugly on the streets so you better watch your back from the phony, because they are going to lead you to death, now you're put to rest. Well hey I suggest you go the positive route because life in the hood is never the way to go.

-Positive in San Francisco

Homies On The Block

When I needed it the most, it was nowhere to be found.
All the homies on the block trying to eat and survive.
But what they need to know is that it's survival of the fittest so can't nobody cry.
The homies on the block trying to eat off some rocks
But when the feds catch up it's life
On the block without yo Glock.
Yo, 17 shots is like the seventeen years of life.
Life that should have never been taken,
but you just behind them bars living it.

-Ronnie in San Francisco

Mom Wasn't There

When I needed you to be honest with me you lied When I needed some questions answered you lied When I needed someone to talk to, you ignored me and smoked When I... forget you mom, I hate you. You lie, you cheated on your husband, you choose your boyfriend over us.

You let your stupid ass boyfriend hit and abuse your own kids. Whatever. Forget you. I can't even call you mom, I have no feeling for you

I tried so darn hard to help you but your drugs and boyfriends are worth more than us

You wasn't even there for me as a kid and now you want me to get a job to support your drugs and want me to worship your boyfriend.

Well guess what?... I got to live my life now. Thanks for nothing.

-Your Kid in Sacramento

I Finally Realized

When I needed it most you wasn't there When I needed it most you left me When I needed it most you said you didn't care. You wasn't answering when I needed it most When I needed it most you tried to ignore me. When I needed it most you were far away When I needed it most I couldn't find you. When I needed it most I closed my eyes and prayed. When I needed it most I couldn't get an "I love you." When I needed it most I cried When I needed it most I got angry When I needed it most doing everything bad came to mind. When I needed it most you didn't supply it. When I needed it most I found someone else to talk 2. Now it took so long for me to realize that you Were never there and you're not going to be here. Damn I wish you could see that I've been there but you just don't care.

-Vibba in Sacramento

Silver Lining

You guys asked me to write about "When I needed it the most." Well I have a felling when you need it that bad it's already too late. There were so many times when I needed it the most, and so many times when they didn't show or let me down. I had to breathe, count back from ten, and say, "I guess I wasn't the one who needed it the most."

My problems are puny compared to those around me. Coming here today, having one-on-one conversations with others my own age, and the atrocious things I've heard from their past...it makes me seriously think in I am in a room of superhero's. Even the workers here, they came to give love and support to people who need it the most. And so much care for a complete stranger is truly amazing. As I look around I see the silver lining in the sky. It's in plain view.

-Tehyanah in Sacramento

When I Needed It Most

When I needed it most you told me I had to go.
When I needed it the most you threw me out the door.
When I needed it the most you took me to the store.
When I needed it the most you told me I can't have no more.

-Ebony in San Francisco

Fine Being Me

A mentor A friend A hug A person to tell me it would be okay
A good teacher who could see I was just fine being me

-Myself in Sacramento

Unsteady Boat

When I needed it the most
it was nowhere close,
love and affection an unsteady boat.
Steady pushin and pullin
as the waves came through.

My feelings topsy-turvy
no one to turn to
so my world turned blue.

Depression was the obsession and there was no rule
about the feelings that I had
and what I was going to do.

So I made the move
I had to better the things about me.
Keep my head high
forget the ones that try to doubt me
I refuse to live my life steady down.

When I needed it the most
It was nowhere close,
love and affection an unsteady boat.

-CJ in Sacramento

You Were There And You Weren't

When I needed it the most you were there through
thick and thin.

When I needed you the most you were gone
and when I needed most we talked and talked
I love you for that.

When I needed the most you cared and comforted me
and when I needed you, you put me down.
And when I needed you the most you put me on a high
and above the clouds

and when I needed you, you went away
and when I was down u came and helped.

-Brandon in Sacramento

No One Was There

I believed God was always for everything. When I needed
it most all I had to do was cry, call his name and sing.
When I needed it most I felt like I had nothing. When I
needed it most no one was there for me.

-Alone in Oakland

Our Paths

When I needed u the most you were not here.
When I needed u the most I thought u didn't care.

When I needed u the most u put me down.
When I needed u the most u were never around.

The times when I look in the mirror
I see a lost child that has no place to go.

When I look at u I see guilt
but don't feel that way cuz I know
God will lead you on the right path

-Jocelyn in Sacramento

You Say, She Say, He Say

They say psychiatric help? for me? no way...I'm abnormal
to the normal and informal to the formal! Why? Because
I'm me. I'm wrong? How come what "they" exposed me to
got me sprung? Now because my mom "Angela the dope
fiend" is now just Angela. Now because I'm in the major
drug scene I'm not what the system's cut out for me...
So when I was a straight A student how now come my
probation officer wasn't handing me an award? So when
I need it most, to be told me some advice "stay in school,
don't be a fool..." NO Advice! So now when he puts these
handcuffs around my wrist, his advice is "don't do that
next time..." so my question is where is the system when
I need them the most? -Bridelia in Sacramento Skin
Color

When I needed it the most why do most of my friends
seem to abandon me like I was a ghost? I'm so lost and
confused not knowing what to do. Stuck in a world where
people still judge you on the color of your skin, but not
on what you know from within.

-Sokna in Sacramento

Stumbling

When I needed it the most it got pulled away.

When I needed it the most no one was there.

Being in a room alone in the dark, with a stranger
inside.

When I needed it the most my heart and eyes were shut
down.

I stumbled and crumbled and lost my soul.

When I needed you the most you turned your back on
me.

But now that you want me to need you, I don't need you
no more.

-Jessica in San Diego

Making It Through

My mom walked away from me

*When I needed it the most...

My family left me

*When I needed it the most

They all left me

*When I needed it the most

My Aunt hugged me

*When I needed it the most

That shoot went into the basket

*When I needed it the most

My family came back

*When I needed it the most

My dad came into my life

*When I needed it the most

That check came through

*When I needed it the most

My car started

*When I needed it the most

I passed that class

*When I needed it the most

My nephew was born

*When I needed it the most

I found my self

*When I needed it the most

I became a strong woman

*When I needed it the most

-Sade in San Diego

Through My Ups And Downs

What I needed most was love
 I need love everyday of my life
 What I needed it most was care
 Care is a big part of life from parents
 What I needed most was knowledge
 Knowledge helps you get through life
 What I needed most was thoughts
 I wish people cared bout me like I do myself

What I needed most was drugs at one point
 What I needed most was sex at one point
 What I needed most was a parent
 To love and care for me through my ups and downs
 What I needed most was clothes,
 A roof over my head, food, shoes, on my feet
 When I needed it most was Jesus for life
 He has helped me through
 A lot of pain and fears

What I needed most was a good man
 What I needed most was a phone
 What I needed most was my Father
 What I needed most was a true family that loves me for me

I hate the fact that all those
 things that I have wished and
 asked for has never happened.
 Sitting here talking to those wonderful
 people about life and what I have been through
 helps me become a better person
 I am so blessed, and I love it

-Blessed in Sacramento

God's Wisdom

No one was there when I needed it most. I prayed and had faith God would be there. When I needed it most, money wasn't there. No one had a hand to spare. Robbing and stealing made me a criminal. In jail all the people that watched over me wanted me to fail. Short days and long nights led to a lot of anger and a lot of fights. All I can remember wanting to do was be high as a kite. With no therapy with the staff acting shady, I felt like a little intermediate baby wanting to get taken away by fairy.

When I needed it the most God was there, giving me knowledge and power to carry on, He gave me the strength to take the hard heartbreaking stones that were thrown and also made me believe I shouldn't stop until I was sitting above all on my own thrown.

-Josè in San Diego

Why Take Chances?

Why should I take chances? I came into this world for a reason: to take a chance in life to suffer or to live right. I have suffered throughout my life. I took so many chances to try to commit suicide but for some reason I'm still here. I told the man up above, "Why me?" I ask what is this for? What good does it do? Send me a message." On March 2, 2007 he returned my message by sending me a lil baby girl. She's is my experience to take a chance, everything you do is chance, you are willing to take chance for one reason or another. for me it's my daughter.

-Daisy in San Diego

On A Distant Planet

When I needed it most there was no one there for me
 When I needed it most I was lost with no one there to find me
 When I needed it most I was all alone with no one beside me
 When I needed it most I felt like an outsider on a distant planet whose goal was to have someone there for him
 But there was nobody there to hear my call
 When I needed it most.....

-Nathan in Sacramento

I Love You Mom

When I needed it most
 my mom was the only one there.
 She took care of me,
 listened when I needed to talk,
 and was there when I had my son.
 When I needed it most my mom was there
 to protect me and keep me safe.
 No matter what was going on when I needed you,
 you helped me off the ground.
 You gave me what I needed
 which was love and support.
 You helped me through
 good and bad times.
 When I needed you the most you
 were right there and you've never left me—
 that's how I know you care.
 Even when life gets rough
 you never give up on me.
 So I like to thank you because
 when I needed you the most you were there.
 I love you mom

-Lala in Sacramento

Looking For A Friend

I became too old and ashamed to ask,
 My present fears the future as I
 Hope to catch a glimpse from the past.
 Rejection would seem a little easy if
 I never had to see you again
 But as you close the door you then
 Run to the window to see me struggle
 In this wicked land.

If not you, then who can be my friend?
 I called on the Lord looking for a
 Physical touch and there was my dad,
 A spiritual man.
 I must have been praying too long
 Because even in my dreams you left
 Me all alone.

-Amanda in San Diego

Letting It Out

I was told to keep quiet, that I was supposed to live this way. Now I have a lot to say, but no way to let it out. I feel as if I need to let out a cry, but cannot because I learned to keep quiet. I'm 19 now and still it is hard to express myself. The only way I was able to express myself was through sports, but no words came out just movement. Getting out the words to what I feel is an everyday challenge.

-Rosaura in San Diego

What Did I Really Need?

When I needed it most I poured a shot & made a toast
 When I needed it most I loaded the bong and took a toke
 When I needed it most the white powder eat up my nose
 When I needed it most I hurt those who were close
 When I needed it most my temper rose
 When I needed it most I did a lot of things,
 but what I want to know is what I needed the most.

-Patrick in San Diego

You Weren't There, I Was

When I needed you the most
 No one knew what to say

When I needed you the most
 I felt like everyone blew my thoughts away.

When I needed you the most
 Different paths would help me discover the real me.
 I asked I begged, but all they did was make me feel
 ashamed.

When I needed you the most
 To help me see if I was choosing the right path; all they
 did was turn their backs on me.

When I needed you the most
 I sucked it up and became a mom.

When I needed you the most
 I discovered that I truly didn't need those things.
 I needed to discover and secure me.
 I just needed to work towards something.
 I worked towards my son and I found out
 he was the one who needed me.

-Simone in San Diego

Chances

When I needed it the most
 I found myself alone.

You weren't there.

You promised you would,
 But you once again failed.

You asked me to trust you

To confide in and acknowledge you,
 But where were you when I needed you the most?

I found myself alone again,

You once again weren't there.

I gave you a second chance

But I guess I set you up to fail.

I knew you weren't going to be able to be there

To listen, hold my hand and care,

But I took my chances once again

To make sure I was being fair

-Candy in San Diego

Human

I needed for everyone
 to stop seeing me as a thief
 and start looking at me
 like I'm human.

-Human in San Diego

Help For Me And My Baby

Teen Options helped me. They helped the most when I was pregnant, and I needed stuff for my baby. They helped me to get some info on being a teen parent. I'm finished with the program. I learned how to take care of my baby more. They helped me with her hygiene, diapers, and wipes, and helped us manage money.

-Yesenia in San Diego

Turned Out Good

I don't know where I would be at today if things didn't go the way they did. My biological family didn't have too much money. We were always getting evicted, not having money to pay utilities so they were shut off. Two adults and seven kids. The last house we got evicted from was the last time we were a family.

Shortly after that day two of my sisters went off with my little brother, going shoplifting and getting caught. One of them and my younger brother were taken to polinsky where shortly we were all taken into the system. I went to polinsky, and then a group home. I got very adapted to where I was living and comfortable.

I got a job and two years later I moved out to an apartment at a transitional living program. I continued working where I later met the love of my life. I feel in love and we had a beautiful son together. I'm doing great with my finances and son, and I'm glad things turned out the way they did. And I thank Jesus and the Lord because He knew my life was going to turn out this way. Thank you God and Jesus.

-Ardes in San Diego

Future Life

I felt that in the next 5 years I see myself going to work, saying good morning to my employees, or bringing in coffee and donuts, going to my desk. I am working as a veterinarian assistant. I would be a well-respected, honest person. Before I go to work, I would say thank you God for letting me live my life.

I found my self living with roommates, being responsible. I think that I found myself having a little bit of problems in my life & being alone, thinking about a lot of things in the past, present, future. So I would want to have a good life, a lil bit of drama, good times, bad times, & etc. So when life goes on it goes on.

-Gabriel in San Diego

A Friend

I need someone to talk to that is my age, that knows where I'm coming from. I've had a hard life, and only a few people were there for me. Without those few I ain't sure I would even be here right now. The life of a teenager is a dark road, and most parents forget what it was like. Now there are people getting shot, my friends are becoming parents. Life is hard and you need someone to talk to, to pick you up when you down, make you feel like you ain't left all alone. Now all I got is family holding me up, and I need more, someone to talk to at all times no matter what it is. That is how I feel.

-Teenager in Daly City

Collective Consciousness

Two powerful words,
Words unheard,
Too profound or often ignored
They relate to the bitter and bittersweet
The love and the hate
The gay and the straight
Your world, your mother nature
Collective consciousness deals with truth,
It faces lies head on
Collective consciousness challenges individuals
Groups, masses of intelligent minds, wise minds
Collective consciousness begins with love
Teaches with understanding
And heals with care
It's patient
It hears all
Collective consciousness begins with me and you.

I want to teach you
I want to unravel the lies taught to you
About your health
What do you know
About our mistreated nature
Do you care?

Will you listen? Are you aware?

-Heaven in San Diego

Your Daughter

When I needed it most
You came into my life
To guide me
To show me I was not lost

When I needed it most
You showed me all the open doors
And the right path to take
When I needed it most
You held my hand
And let me lean on your shoulder
And cry

When I needed it most
You taught me to love myself
And to accept my life

When I needed it most
You took me out of the dark place
And led me to the light

And now
That you need it most
Remember I am here
I am your daughter.

-Carolina in San Diego

Amen

You were not there for me. Now that things got better you want to be part of it. I cried to you, and you didn't care. I needed you here. You decided to leave, but on the day that you need me I guess I will be here. It was hard to get now that stuff's getting better I'm leaving like a train. I seem to have just myself, even though you said you still care. Throughout all my problems you were being just unfair. I know where to go now, I go talk to my friend, yes, a friend. A dad--something I always wanted and now I have that, when I need him that most. I can call Jesus Christ. When you need him most you can call his name, and you will sure see that he is there for you. Amen.

-A Believer in Fresno

My Mind Was Thinking Of Wrong things to do

My Mind Was Thinking Of Wrong things to do so I started to do things on my own, but my mom stayed on my side. So that's why I think my mom is my hero. Because she is always there for me. She is the reason why I stopped hanging around with gang members and doing bad things. Now I am a soon to be graduate from high school. Hoping to fulfill my dreams and hopefully help my mom out. She really deserves it.

-Richard in Fresno

Be There For Me

I just wanted someone to be there to listen to me when I needed to be listened to. Like when I want to cry for no reason. Just someone with me, even if it's just to hear my cry. I want someone to be there. I'm a very lucky girl. I have a lot of people that care for me, but sometimes you want someone else, someone not known to you. Sometimes all we need is for someone to listen, even if it's just to hear about your day.

-Someone in Daly City

Trying To Glue Me Back Together

As I sit here looking at a blank paper,
I don't know what to write.
My heart feels empty, lonely,
and hurts so much.
It's like the person you love
took your heart and dropped it
and shattered it into millions of pieces.
Trying to glue your heart back together
feels like it will never heal.
There's always going to be that glue
that peels away from it.
This experience has been great,
knowing I'm not the only one
going through the problems.
We need more resources
and people to spread the word
about programs that help our youth.

-Uglued in Daly City

Every Day

I needed it the most when my Ma chose crack
over me and my three siblings.
I needed it most when my Pa left us.
I needed it most when I got beat.
I needed it most when I got chased.
I needed it most when I broke my arm twice.
Needed it most when my friend got shot.
I needed it most today.
I needed most in the future.
I need it every god-forsaken day.

-Needy in Daly City

She Killed Herself, Not Me

I needed positive attention, the right love and support. The space to mess up, but not let it be thrown in my face again and again. A person to listen and care about me and what I'm going through.

My mom committed suicide when I was ten-and-half years old. Say that to anyone, and they'll know you have issues. How do you not become depressed when your depression comes from a loss that was caused by depression? I wish someone had answered that question instead of asking me "How did that make me feel?"

I wish that my support system showed up at the eleven years instead of at sixteen-and-a-half. People scratch their heads wondering what to do with me...Here's the answer: "Listen!!" All I needed was open ears, with no judgment or pressure.

But like they say, everything happens for a reason. You live and you learn, and deal the best way you can. I'm still struggling with my mom's death, but I'm getting better at it. No more cutting my arm. Now I run and yell, and listen to music, and laugh because she killed herself, not me.

Everyday is a struggle to not feel alone, but positive people and energy help me move on. I won't give up the way that she did. She left me and what was left of her me strength, and I'm going to use it!!!

-Strugglin' in Daly City

Encouragement

I think that without my mom and dad I wouldn't be who I am today. Because they are the ones who encouraged me to go to school and be a good person. Not like my older brother and sister that don't have a diploma. That is why I love my mom and dad so much.

-Good in Fresno

My mom committed suicide when I was ten-and-half years old. Say that to anyone, and they'll know you have issues.

What I Really Needed

When I needed it most...
You support me all the way...
When I needed it most...
You gave me what I want
And what I needed...
When I needed it most...
You loved me...
Just what I needed most...

-Loved in Fresno

God Was A Big Help

When I needed it most all I had was myself and God. I didn't know myself too well so God was a big help. I feel like as a young man talking about these things is not very um...cool, hip you know.

-Young Man in Daly City

Suffering And Moving On

When I needed help the most was when I lost my mother at the age of four. Everything went down for me. My brothers and sisters and I were separated and because of that we grew up to be totally different people. I grew up with no father figure or mother.

I think what I needed the most was love from another person. Love like from a mother or a father. Not someone that had hate for me and was abusive and wasn't caring for me. Not from someone who only cared about their real kids and bought them everything that they wanted while I was left to suffer without clothes and food. I watched them laugh at my face.

I think that was when I needed love the most. What I got was, "I hate you faggot, I wish you were never born." But that's the past, and all I gotta think about is the present and the future. Now I learn how to forgive and forget.

-Rene in Fresno

A Child Of God Surrounded By Beasts

When I needed it most was my time on the streets always a child of God but surrounded by beasts.

When I needed it most is when times wasn't fair.

In my cell all alone with frustration in the air.

With no place to call home and when no one truly cared.

When I needed it most it was a struggle within.

No mother, no father, no brother or friend.

When my surroundings said kill or rob for specific dividends.

When I needed it most is when no one was by my side. What happened to the soldiers that promised to ride or die?

How could a true friend lie while looking in your eye?

When I needed it most.

When I needed it most.

-Kalei in Fresno

It Takes Some Time

Courage, pushing forward, and strength is what I need more in life. Courage is something that was not ever given to me. I'm always the one listening to people's problems and trying to give them the right advice. I got so many things on my head, people's problems, including my own that I don't even talk about, only to myself.

Push, yea I been pushed a couple times, maybe you could say more than a couple of times, but my mind works slow, so I'll get things later. My motto is you live and you learn. If you don't live it how you suppose to grow up knowin about what's really out there. For me that's how my life has always been. I always learn from what I did.

Strength, yeah, I lost my strength a long time ago but I'm trying to get it back, but it takes some time.

-Pushed in Daly City

A Message For The Adults Who Want To Help

"All I needed was someone who would listen and not judge me." That is what so many of the youth I've worked with and currently work with say to me. America is constantly looking for quick fixes and the truth is there are no quick fixes. In participating as an observer at the Youth Views: A Prevention And Early Intervention Roundtable Discussion, I was listening carefully for tips on how I could do my job better.

I look critically at social workers, youth workers, case managers and counselors that mean well but create a lot of unhealthy situations. Helping people is a special profession. Everyone cannot and is not qualified to serve young people. It takes a lot of heart, passion, skill and personal work to help someone well.

Counter-transference and transference are big fancy words that also help explain why things don't go right! It just means that as professionals our personal shit gets in the way. If we do not take care of our personal issues, if we are not healthy, physically, emotionally, and mentally, we are no good to anyone else.

I have worked with so many amazing human beings who love young people and passionately wanted to assist young people heal and prepare for a successful future. I have served as a colleague and supervisor for these amazing people... but saw the difference it made to young people. Those who were very effective were non-judgmental, kind, responsible, reliable, good listeners, positive, and owned a great sense of humor. A great sense of humor includes making people laugh and laughing at yourself!

The greatest barrier for many of my colleagues was their ego. If the work became more about them than the job position, their responsibilities, or youth they were working for, a judgmental language and blaming began, and eventually contributed to the same trauma/treatment the youth received at some point in their life that led them to the service to begin with.

The most beautiful thing I witnessed at the roundtable was young paying tribute to individuals who made a difference in their lives. They healed, learned, and benefited from the service of caring, competent and giving individuals. As one of the young agencies I work with and respectfully quote Ghandi, "To find yourself, one must lose themselves in the service of others."

-Kruti Parekh, Social Worker in Los Angeles

Lost And Confused In This World, So Abused

I look up to see an angel looking down at me.
Pulling me up, pushing me forward, always there,
someone who really cared.
Tears welling up in my eyes, all these spiteful people I
despise passing through.
I pass right through, following the light radiating from
you.

When I needed it the most you were there smiling,
bathing in radiance I melt.
I admire the way you shine.

-Crystal in Fresno

Facing Life Alone

I was left alone with the world on my shoulders, slowly growing cold. Life's feeling pointless, I start feeling worthless. When I needed you the most you weren't there. My mind's grown mentally, forced to face life with no one but me, reality sinks in....

-Alone in Fresno

Guides

In my opinion, teenagers these days are going through challenging issues everyday in their lives. My idea would be having youth that have been through challenges and have overcome those same challenges. High schools are a big asset to sponsor and reach out for the youth, to participate and guide them to overcome their own challenges when they face them.

-Youth in Daly City

I have worked with so many amazing human beings who love young people and passionately wanted to assist young people heal and prepare for a successful future.

Dreams

How are we supposed to live a hell-filled life of nothing but dreaming and hardships? Those dreams stay in your head while we face those hardships in reality. In our adolescence there's no one to turn to, or at least that's how we feel. We feel no one really understands us, so therefore we trust no one.

It takes courage for our youth to open up. A lot of people downgrade us for what we've gone through. Others pity but do nothing. If only there was someone there. If only. I'm just lucky I guess to have found someone who really cared.

-Lucky in Fresno

This Is About Me And The Way You Did Not Care

When I needed you the most you were not there. When I wanted things, you were not there to give. When I needed a shoulder to lean on or cry on, you were not there to show me you care. When I wanted to go home, you would always say no. When I just wanted to go to school and learn, you would say to me, "No, you have to stay home and clean and take care of your brothers and sisters."

This is about my life, how the only person I had showed me that she only gave birth to me so I could do her job as a parent.

-Jasmin in Fresno

*One self's discretion
Complete in confession
Really need to undo
the suppression
To prevent being crushed
by the compression*

Oh Really?

I know him.
He was at my brother's house once.
I know him.
He's the one who got in trouble with the guns.
I know him.
I know what he's done.
I know his name and he knows how to have fun.
He's crazy.
He's dumb.
He's lazy.
He's scum.
I wouldn't mess with him.
You don't know where the quiet ones are from.
What's that we really know?
What's that that is going to set him off?
Oh my Gosh, get away! He's about to blow!
Sitting outside gets kind of chilly.
Haven't seen you for a while, I missed you.
Oh Really?

-Lewis, Dakota County

From The Beat: Lewis again very creative. The Beat is wondering if you are reflecting on what is going on inside of you or if this is someone you know. Who ever it is, it sounds like you know him well! Keep writing and keep exploring your creativity! Good job!

Untitled

I'm glad you always talked to me
Told me about all the things that be.
Almost any topics you knew about
Told me how to do things to remain on a straight route
Buried in me all the wisdom you keep
Made me a better man, kept it deep, you, reap what you
sow is what you told
The light of wisdom is what I hold,
Never do wrong on top of wrong
I hear it clear like a song
Taught me the real meaning of loyalty
Showed me the way to do it to live like royalty
Never entertained the thought of failure
Since you showed me how to succeed.

-Alex, Dakota County

From The Beat: Alex sounds like you had or have a special person in your life that has been looking out for you. Keep them close throughout your life. This will help you go far.

From The Beat: This week we are honored to have back in our pages several voices/pieces from the Dakota County JSC in Hastings Minnesota. A big shout out not only to the writers featured in this issue, but to Joe Esler, Probation Officer for getting us these pieces this week! Thanks again to all of you in Dakota County JSC who believe in this good work. See you soon!

Begotten Tales in a Block

One self's discretion
Complete in confession
Really need to undo the suppression
To prevent being crushed by the compression
Totally tormented technically towards
Brutally biased beneath the boards
Sin boastfully in the sun and show your sword
Get gone with the secrets, give faith to our Lord
This is no sermon in stone
Or a sword in a rock
These are my begotten tales
And they are all in a block.

-Lewis, Dakota County

From The Beat: Good rhyming with your words Lewis. Keep up with your imagination and never let it go!

THE GREEN ALPHABET

More yellow with blue, than the color green grows. (And I like jade too. I had some jade earrings.)
It's been awhile since I've seen those. I've seen red, I've seen blue but I've never seen a green rose. Not them. Not these. I'm sorry. I mean those.
All of these things are dirty.
I want some clean clothes. Squirt highlighter in my room and get the black light, and the whole scene glows.
I'm outta things to say. That's about it. That's as far as the color green goes.

-Lewis

From The Beat: Lewis The Beat has never seen a green rose either. Good imagination in your writing. Different colors have impact on our lives and you did well writing this out. Don't lose your imagination!



The Deal

Sixteen years, sixteen years is what the judge and DA gave me. I'm only seventeen and that shhh is sixteen years, sixteen-thousand tears.... for stress, depression and pain.

That's the deal, sixteen years. Damn, that's my whole life and it ain't no getting back to that. I might laugh or always keep a smile on my face, but that means nothing but strength and power. I'm still feelin' pain on the inside of me, can't no one be in my jeans or shoes for a day to feel what I feel or see what I see, but myself I been in here (jail) for many sec's minutes, hours, days, weeks and months, and I still cry while I'm in my room, I cry on the phone I cry on my pillow, I cry in my sleep, and I cry on my my heart. It's because I cry don't mean I'm a b or weak. I cry because of how much time I have to do , and lookin' at all the things I'm missin' on the outs. Time waits on no man or woman, that's how the world is made. You either be dead, in jail, or living, that's how the white man built the world. The world is a maze.

The other day, I was losin' myself off stress and madness, and when the judge said "sixteen years" all I did was walk out the door. OK, and that was it, that's all I can is accept it. The system now has my life in their hands until I get out, and for right now while I'm in jail, I don't have a life or my name 'cause the white man only knows me by a number.

I never will put a period where got put a comma" As my life doesn't end in here (jail). It keeps goin' until I want my life to end, until my heart stops, until I feel my life is useless.

One thing I'm tired of hearing is when people get mad or try to stress themselves out because they are going to a group home or Camp Sweeney. That's nothing, knock that 6 to 9 months out and you free, either way it goes you still free and eatin' good.

I been locked up for so long that I already did a group home or a Camp Sweeney program. I seen this whole unit change, whoever been here in max for 3,4 weeks or 3,4 months, I already did 3,4 weeks and 3,4 months and more at that. And I still have time to do, not weeks or months, -years, sixteen of 'em.

I ain't goin' home. After this place, I'm going to the penitentiary, a place where I don't want to go and a place I never thought about going. I'm goin' to a place where people get raped, stabbed, killed or beat on, a place where you ALWAYS have to look behind you and around you, a place where you can't be alone, a place where you take a shower with all dicks and asses all up in ya face and no stalls to block you, and the other people around you, a place where a man feels free and like he's at home because jail is the only place where a man has to live forever. Or just for a few years.

-J-Money, Alameda

From The Beat: Your name is Johnny, and it will always be Johnny to us and to the other Beat readers who have come to know and respect you through your wonderful contributions. No matter what happens, nothing the system does can ever take your humanity away "as long as the jewel on the left side of your chest does not lose it's luster." Keep heart, Johnny. You will never be a number to us readers of The Beat.

One thing I'm tired of hearing is when people get mad or try to stress themselves out because they are going to a group home or Camp Sweeney.

A Sad Time

Once I was really sad. My uncle had gotten into a car accident and past away. I was heart broken. My emotions were too unbearable communicate with anyone around. My sadness continued through out the week.

Even through I was hurt, I could not afford to miss anymore days of school because the high school exit exams where coming soon and I couldn't afford to miss the exams because I had miss them already once.

As I approached the school campus the next day, I was really quiet and sad. I have a lot of enemies that decided to pick a fight with me that day. The first one that walked up to me, I threw my books down and jumped on her as a crowd of kids formed around us. I went crazy on her.

In the end, I got expelled from school. I wish that my sadness didn't change into anger. If I was in a better mood I think I would have kept my peace.

- Juanaki , Alameda

From The Beat: You were very vulnerable and grieving. We are sorry for the loss of your uncle and that the circumstance at school put you in a worse situation. We hope that you'll find a way to separate sadness from anger. Your uncle seems to have been a special person in your life...? We also hope you are working on controlling your anger and quick impulse.

Thinkin' (A Series Of Short Lyrics)

Court

I ain't gonna lie. I was shook
Lookin' at Judge K for the third time now
I know he gon' throw the book
He asked me did I have anything to say
But I didn't try
Jesus could walk into court
But I'd still be goin to the Y

Stuck In My Room

I'm livin a dream
Or should I say a nightmare
My life is slippin' through my fingers
"I had it, it was right there!"

Getting Shot

My stomach is turning
These bullets are burning
And I can't stop the pain

The Real From The Fake

Ninjas talking all that shhh
About what they gon' be
But when I get out
I probably see their face
On a white tee

Friend Or Foe

Ninjas hatin' on me
They supposed to be my bra tho'
That's why you never know
Who is friend or foe

Rappin' In My Room

Catch feelin's you'll be hot
Catchin' the steel
Weapons directed at yo neck chest and yo' grill.

-Jesus, Alameda

From The Beat: These short poems are amazing, like Japanese Haiku or Tanka. They're like little slices of truth, pieces of a puzzle that come together to show a picture of your mind and all the different things you face. Keep it up. Long or short, you are a real poet!

It's So Cold....

It's so cold when a man says he loves you,
But you see him down the street with the next chick,
Hah, thought you was wifey,
But you actually close to last in his draft pick,

It's so cold when nobody in this world gives a shhh
about what,
I'm going through,
People are quick to run when situations seem difficult,
But when it benefits them, they're right there for you,

It's so cold when you are hurting,
And don't have a shoulder to lean on,
You end up carrying all that baggage around to every
man &
Relationship
You act harder then you need to
Holding it inside
You pick up bad habits you can't kick

It's so cold when some people play games
And start messin' wit' my mind
You search here, there, everywhere for the truth
Yet it's something you can't find

Its cold when you love some somebody and they really
don't
Love you
You can try to fight it
Try to stop and influence their actions and reactions
Try to change them but it's something you just can't do

It's so cold in this game called life,
It holds no prisoners
It will take you in,
Accept you but spit you back out
Your fabulous life turns into torment and ridicule
And being fake and taken advantage of is the last thing I
wanna be
About!

- Deonna, Alameda

From The Beat: This poem is like a sharp arrow, pointing directly at the heart of the matter for you and for a lot of women. You chose your words well. Even though you speak of pain, you can still examine them with your rational mind. We hope you don't stop writing lady!

My Change...

What's up Beat? Well, I'm still here. I thought I was gonna be outa here like two weeks ago. I can't do anything about it but do my time. When I first got here, someone told me everything happens for a reason. My response to that was "WTF! I'm locked up. There ain't no good in that." But as time went by, I realized the reason.

With my three weeks here, I've gotten very into religion. I've been praying when I have to, reading my Quran and changing my old ways. I think God and my family are the only things that I need. I plan on keeping up with my prayer, reading of the Quran and everything I've been practicing.

Another thing I've learned is a lot of people I called friends aren't shhh. A lot of them got me into trouble and the opposite of what mama wanted from me. Straight up when I'm out I'ma show everyone that I'm a changed person. Well Beat, hopefully I'll be out soon and in college. Stay up!

-Muslim Warrior, San Francisco

From The Beat: If it took this experience to bring you back to God and a decision to change your life for the better, then maybe it's worth it. Of course, it's much easier to commit yourself to doing good when you're locked up and not able to make your own decisions than when you're on the outs and faced with the same old temptations. Don't forget your promises. We'll look for you in college!

Something To Talk About

Sometimes I be feeling hopeless
I be on the corner posting
Just trying to get some dough quick
Then my mind be telling me that I should of stayed in
school or something
Now I am in the streets and I don't be doing nothing
Sometimes I sit in my room and cry
'Cause I got so much pain inside
'Cause in less then a year 7 of my patnas have died
Then I got a couple of patnas that have committed some
sins

And now they headed straight to the pen
I know wishes don't come true but I be still wishing
I am in a position
Where I pimp females 'cause I ain't really got no time for
love
Half of my potnas looking out for me from the heavens
above

While the other half are strung out on drugs
Did a couple things that were against the
commandments

Because my mind was stranded
I tell God everyday that I love him but I got to ride
So if I do something you don't like I apologize
Then I got my other patnas doing life with chains
While I am out here trying to change
I shed so many tears you will think it was rain
This right here is for the current time what I am trying
to say is

I had to pay for all them years I was slinkin'
2002 asked God where's my blessing at
But I think he did it to see how I was gonna react
And I reacted with a bang
And told myself I was never gonna hesitate to bust my
thang

2007 is when one of my best friends turned snitch
Told the whole shhh

He had me on one, had me scared to go outside my
house, so I had to lay low
Then my dreams got shattered of getting rich and
leaving the "O"

Then I kept thinking of our putting work era
We was busting thangs at ninjas from the hottest blocks
in America

Now he ain't real
He just had to squeal
He was one of my patnas that I'll do anything for even
kill

But shhh happens/

Well Beat this is gonna be the last piece I am going to write ya! Thanks for coming through Max every Tuesday and helping me find a talent that I am good at, I hope I succeed in the outside world. And don't come back here, or die on them outs. I hope I win my case on Thursday wish me luck.

-Baby Q, Alameda

From The Beat: Whatever comes up you'll meet all your old devils again, and maybe even some new ones. But you have an angel in you, as you've shown us week in and week out in the Beat all these months. Hold on to that angel, the poet inside, and he will be your guardian, no matter what happens, no matter how bad it gets. And if it gets good, you better show up at our office to let us know! Peace, prayers, remember you will always have a home in our pages.

I think God and my family are the only things that I need.

Messed Up

Well my name is Novoj. I was born 1994 Aug 18.

I had a rough life. I think it's because I was born and grew up in East Palo Alto, the ghetto: Having to watch your back every time you in the streets or walk out your door, having to keep a gun on you at 10 years old, watching people die is messed up. It will mess your mind up. When I was young living out there pretty much got me locked up. Messed up ain't it, getting locked up over a hood or a click or gang. When I got locked up I was pissed. I got locked up over someone talking shhh over my click and I realized that it's stupid but I kept coming back over my hood and click.

It's my fourth time and I've really realized this shhh is stupid. So now when I get out I'm still going back to my hood but no more work. I'm still going to have to keep my pistol and help my mom with the bills and groceries. To live and survive.

-Novoj, Santa Clara

From The Beat: There's nothing you can do about where you were born, and what you saw, growing up. But now you're almost a man, and you have to make new decisions about how to live. There are programs to help young people in your position get legit jobs, get help with their educations. What would happen if you looked your mom straight in the eye and said "I'm ready to go legit." We bet she'd support you, any way she could. You might make less money (at first), but there's only one way to make sure you never use a pistol. And that's to put it down once and for all, you deserve better!

The Price Of Success

What's up Beat? Ya know it's Jay Pitt, feel me, still maintaining. But I learned something and it's that the price of success is dedication, hard work, and an unrelenting devotion to see the things you want in life or happening. Meaning to put your all in things you do. Work hard with effort into it and appreciate it. And at last, believe and you should see all things in life. think about it.

Just some knowledge for y'all. I'm out.

-Jay Pitt, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a short piece, Jay Pitt, but it's packed with truly excellent advice and knowledge. We hope you can put this knowledge to use in your own life so that you get to move forward in freedom.

Give A Speech About Confusion

Confusion. This is the feeling that I have since I been here. I feel as though innocence is looked down upon in the court of law. It has come to the point that if I want to go home and be with my family than I must lie and say that I am guilty. This prolongs my confusion.

I have always been told to tell the truth. Telling the truth is the right thing to do, but in this case - lying is less of a burden on myself and my family.

Before I was in this predicament, I told the truth and that got me where I am today.

I feel as though the system is so messed up that it causes many innocent people to believe their own lies, and feel that they are bad people or criminals. I know in my heart if I confess to doing something I didn't do, I will be able to continue my education. Sitting in this place has made me feel unintelligent because I am learning everything I already know, and I have only had intellectual conversation with the staff who are five or more years older than myself... that sums up most of my confusion.

-Vanessa, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This seems like a serious puzzle that you are caught in, whether to stand by your morals and ethics or do whatever it takes to get out. Your confusion is very valid, but it also seems like you know that you don't belong here. Good luck with figuring it all out, and in the meantime - keep writing. We need deep thinkers like you.

My Loving Mom

Well when I was a child, me and my family had it rough, and we use to struggle. I never really had a lot, but always enough.

I remember going back to school after Christmas vacation, all the kids would brag about all the toys they got and all I would get for Christmas was clothes and as a little kid that would be the last thing I wanted. But as I grew older I began to realize that some kids didn't even get that for Christmas.

See my mom worked her ass off to provide for me and my little brother and two sisters. When I was young I was never hungry and I always had a clean pair of clothes to wear. So I appreciate everything my mom has ever done for me, because even though I've messed up a million times, my mom has never left my side and now that I'm older it feels extremely good to help my mom out.

Today, I'm really glad that my family is doing good and we're well off, so my little brother and sisters won't have to go through some of the struggles I've been through. So this piece goes out to my mom. I would be nothing without her.

-Moose, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, lucky you Moose! Your reflection is an important thing, and all of us can benefit from reflection and gaining perspective on our lives. What a mom you have, and what a son she has!

The Beat

The Beat is a paper to express what you're feeling

It opens old wounds and chances for healing

Some Beat topics release a lot of emotion

My thoughts start flowin' like waves in the ocean

The sun starts fading and the rain falling hard

Long life on the outs or an hour on the yard

Which way will I go which way will I go

Which road will I take

Will I ruin my life with the choices I make?

I'm gonna get my mind right and it ain't gonna be easy

It's a life long fight I will succeed

I'll make it to the top 'cause the way

I was raised to strive and never stop.

-Young J, Alameda

From The Beat: We say that, because without great writers like you, we wouldn't exist. One day in our dreams, we won't have to be "Within" anymore, we'll be The Beat Without all the way from the first page to the last. In the meantime: Thanks for the props, one thing is true/The Beat's not just paper, The Beat is you.

Emotions

Emotions have made me a caged animal

Emotions

Caused me to lose my freedom

Emotions

Are like drugs that you can't inhale or drinks

Emotions

Are three dimension and my emotions are mostly bad for me

My emotions

Landed me in a place I don't wanna' be

I'm strong but my emotions are stronger

When bad emotions build up I erupt like a

Volcano

Emotions are really the only thing that you can't make go or stay

I've grown up

I realize emotions are the most powerful thing in the world

They make you, break you, describe you, and influence you

Emotions

Landed me in jail so it's safe to say

Emotions control you

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: The emotions you speak of are powerful, powerful enough to allow us at The Beat, as well as those that read The Beat, to see your true "Emotion." Never stop writing, Reggie, your voice alone holds power.

Giving A Speech About The Real Me

I would describe myself as a person who is real and when I have something to say I will say it. I am very straight up about what I think of you.

My advice to you is: Don't ask a question pertaining to the way you look or your general appearance because you might hear something you don't want to hear.

Another way I am real is that I am honest, even though I have lied many times in my life but lately I have been honest.

I am very responsible. I take responsibility for my mistakes and I know when I have done wrong, and when my mom tells me to do chores I do them.

To cover pretty much everything about me, I am a very positive person. I don't let anyone bring me down, like if someone insults me I usually rub it off like it was nothing.

As far as I'm concerned, everyone has a right to their own opinion. People can think whatever they want of you, but – in my opinion – it only matters what you think of yourself. As long as you love who you are is all that matters.

Let's see, what else can I say about myself. I absolutely, positively hate drama. I hate shhh talk. I don't like people that talk shhh behind your back, but don't have the guts to say it to your face. You can be real with me if you have something to say about me – say it to my face or else keep my name out of your mouth. You can love me or hate me.

Well Beat, I'm out. Peace.

-Big Meg, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your continual self-love is inspiring to all who read your pieces. We appreciate this solidity you have in your self and your self-worth. How do you think others can gain this kind of confidence?

The True Halo

I was born in San Francisco, California, I'm 18 years old and grew up back and forth between two neighborhoods. A lot of people don't know the true me, and judge me because of the outside. I have issues with that, but I learned to let things go.

I've been hurt in many different ways that it takes the man in me to admit it. I've been hurt verbally, mentally, physically, and sexually. People don't understand that I've been through a lot and that's why I'm the way I am. These four issues have tormented me in my life, and still are in some ways. I've been trying to deal with these issues, but it really hard. But these are my cards I was dealt.

Throughout my life, I didn't want these things to happen, but they did. My life was chosen for me but I have to deal with these things. I have to be able to stay strong because I am not a victim any more, I am a survivor. The true me is someone who is gentle, outgoing and someone who is determined to succeed in life. I'm not a thug, gangsta, cholo, whoever you want to see me as. I'm me, and that's what counts. Even though I deal with a lot, I still try and pray for a better day. This is the true me. don't trip on what others say, do you. One love

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, Halo, it takes a real man to acknowledge the kind of hurts you have suffered growing up — things which you didn't ask for or want, but things which you are still forced to deal with. We admire your courage for facing yourself and the demons in your life, for recognizing how strong you must be to be the survivor you are, and for your determination to make tomorrow better than yesterday. We sure hope you keep writing to The Beat even after you get to Colorado. Stay strong, and continue to be the honest person you are.

Lo Que He Vivido

Estoy cansado del camino que llebo. Solo tengo 17 años y el 19 de Octubre cumpla 18 años. He vivido cosas que creo que ningún adulto ha vivido. Realmente he vivido una vida de perro y no me gusta recordarlo porque me destroza el alma. Me han pasado cosas que creo que si las cuento no me van a creer.

Mi familia en Honduras son tan pobres que una vez no comimos por una semana. A mis hermanitos en vez de darles leche, les daban agua con azúcar.

Cuando era más joven me paso lo más horrible que ha marcado mi vida con una herida que no sanara nunca. Solo imaginensen que me pudo haber hecho otra persona del mismo sexo. No me gusta contarlo y por eso no quiero entrar en detalles.

Tengo mil cosas guardadas en mi pecho que cuando las remuevo un poco es como molestar a una serpiente. Me daña mucho, lloro y mi estado de ánimo se va para el suelo.

Creo que con todo lo que me ha pasado, llenaría libros de historias tan feas que creo que no me las creerían. Bueno, quisiera contar más, pero no tengo espacio. Dios bendiga America!

From The Beat: Cuentanosla! Aquí estamos para escucharte. Sabes, a veces cuando uno guarda las cosas que tiene adentro, lastiman más y más. Cuando las hablas, es como un gran alivio. Sentimos mucho todo lo que te ha pasado. Todos hemos pasado por cosas que nos lastiman pero hay que mantenerse fuerte. Siempre manten en mente la forma como te has criado y usarla para ser una persona diferente, una persona que pueda ayudar a su familia a salir adelante. Hay mucha gente que dependen de ti, de tu esfuerzo, de las ganas de vivir. Si estas cosas que te hicieron te siguen perturbando tu vida, deberías de buscar ayuda profesional que te puedan ayudar. Gracias por tu sinceridad y que Dios también te bendiga. Te estamos escuchando y apoyando. Recuerdalo!

What I Had Lived

I'm tired of walking the path I am walking on. I'm 17 years old and in October 19th, I'll be 18 years old. I've gone through things that an adult hasn't gone through. Honestly, I've lived a dog life and I don't like to remember because it destroys my soul. I've gone through things that if I share it with you, you may not believe it.

My family in Honduras is so poor that we didn't eat for a whole week. My lil' brothers and I were fed with water and sugar instead of milk.

When I was younger, the worst and horrible thing happened to me that marked my life and left a scar that will never be erased. Just imagine what other person of the same sex did to me. I don't like to share this and that's the reason why I'm not going to be specific.

I have a thousand of things stuck in my chest that when I think about it, it's like if you were messing with a serpent. It hurts me, I cry and my state of mood goes down to the bottom of the ground.

I think that with all the things I went through, I could write many books based on the bad experience I've been in. I wish I could say more, but I have no more time. God bless America!

-Rafael, San Francisco

From The Beat: Let it out! We're here to listen to you. Sometimes when you release what hurts you, it makes you feel better. We're sorry for the things you've gone through. We all go through things you have lived, but you have to keep yourself strong. Keep active the way you've lived and use it to become a better person, a person that can help the rest of the family in Honduras. There are a lot of people who might depend on you or are depending on you in your life. Think of them. On the other hand, if what you are holding is affecting you so bad, you should look for professional help to make it better. Thank you for your honesty and God bless you too. We are listening and willing to support you in anything. Remember!

My Life

I was born in Oakland California. My parents are from Korea. They moved to Texas first. My parents had my older brother in Texas. When they was 'bout to have me we moved to Oakland, California Growing up I wasn't noticed by my family. My parents were barely at home. Always working, moms and dad. They would work from five in the morning till eleven o' clock at night. When Moms and Dad was at home, they pay attention more to my older brother and my younger sister. I was the middle child. I did whatever I want. While my brother and sister be at the house I would leave and go walk around the block and see my friends to play.

This is when I was about seven years old. My sister would spend more time with my mom and dad cause she would go with them to work. Me and my brother would stay behind and go to school. When I was eleven years old and entering middle school I started doing drugs, I would smoke cigarettes and smoke weed. When I was thirteen I started drinking hard liquor. Growing up I had a saying "Asian Pride".

I was proud of being Asian. All of my friends were Asian. I kicked it with other Koreans. I hung out with Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, and Mien, which is Thailand people. I also kicked it with Tongans and some Mongolians. I hated Japanese people because they invaded my country during the World War. They made my people slaves. That's why I don't like Japanese people.

As I was getting older, I would do a lot of criminal acts. Steal cars, rob houses, get into fights, jumping people we didn't like and playing with real weapons as if they were toys. My older brother was affiliated with an Asian gang. He was not in it but would hang around with them. I looked up to my brother. I wanted to be like him. Most of my friends joined an Asian gang, and I seen they were always with each other like a family. They had a "ride together die together mentality."

I seen this and I was accepted, and also I was fourteen when this happened. At this same age was the first time I came to Juvenile Hall. I was charged with two strong-armed robbery. I was sent to Camp Sweeney. I finished that program and got out. I also got "Asian Pride" tattooed on my arm the next day I got released from my friend.

I was out for a while than got locked up again for stealing a car with my friend. We both went to the hall together and both went to the same unit. I was sent to a group home in North Oakland and my friend was sent to a group home in Sac. I was at my group home for like three months and ran from that program. I was on the run for about three and a half months. Then I got caught, and now I'm in here.

-Korean American, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, we wish you had a name on this incredible piece, so people could know more about the individual person behind the story. But of course we respect your right to keep your name private. It's almost like your own family was so busy that you went out to find another family where you felt more noticed. The sad part is that we're sure your mom and dad love you to death - it's just that often the oldest gets more attention 'cause they're oldest, the youngest cause they're the baby, and the middle child often gets lost in the shuffle. Has being locked up again helped you find out new ways of having "Asian Pride" that don't involve you getting locked up?

*I urge those who has suffer these incarceration-
tions to always remember the feeling of pain
and depression in life that you have gone
through from you actions.*

Give Me Some Discipline!

Something that I have wanted from my parents is discipline because maybe if they were harder on me I would have not ended up here. I did not always want that but now that I'm here and have realized a lot of things and how much my life has changed.

I was thinking what if my parents were harder on me I would have had different friends--Just a whole different way of thinking, maybe. Now, I have to learn from my parents so I can learn how to discipline my daughter when she does something wrong. Therefore, when she gets older she won't end up like me, going to jail for stupid stuff that I should not have gotten involved in. It is no matter that my parents did not discipline me enough.

I have learned the lesson and all I want to do is be with my family and take care of my daughter. I have changed my life for my family and for myself because I am tired of hurting them in doing wrong.

I now know that my parents are going to be the only ones that that will support me in every way--this is since I have told my parents that I am done with everything and all I want to do now is be with them. So, I guess they taught me well and I love them to death and I'm serious about changing my life because I promised them that I would and I'm proving it to myself-- by telling my friends I cannot hang out with them and even backing down from fights.

I'm proud of myself for this and so proud that I can't tell my family how much better I am going to do. My parents have given me everything by simply loving me the way they do. I can't ask them for anything else because they have supported me through everything. So, I'm saying thank you to them and I'm doing all this changing in my life for them and the rest of my family.

-Keon, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow...you got what you wanted from you parents and more! Now, you are looking forward to providing the same love for your daughter. We wish you the best and give you lots of respect for your new understanding.

Giving A Speech

I am here today to tell you about who I am long ago

When I was young I was ignorant and lazy. I always took things in my life for granted. I took my family for granted too -- everything that ever helped me in life I spat at. But one day one of my closest family member passed away.

I then suddenly became angry for what I've done, never appreciating how everything in my life forced me to live life on the edge. I always kept this side of me to myself, but my love a generosity and compassion never changed. I always worried about others and wish for their best after the incident.

But I still had my ignorance toward some. One day I came in this place called Juvenile Hall, and from then I became depressed and longing to go home. As time went on, I came to appreciate those around me more, like and my friends and family. I came to love my family even more and regret my action.

Now I am humble and patient, with even greater appreciation of life and family. I urge those who has suffer these incarcerations to always remember the feeling of pain and depression in life that you have gone through from you actions. And change for the better to create a future of success.

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You made us wish you were really giving this as a speech, so we could stand up and clap and cheer instead of just having to type out a response on the keyboard. Now we really want another "speech" from you next week, where this time you break down the meaning from that last sentence, and share how you plan to achieve that future of success. What steps will you take? Will you have to leave anyone or anything behind? Who and what?

Things Are Gonna Get Brighter

Through my 17 years of life so far I've noticed how my mood changes me tremendously. It's really simple to understand, yet it goes into so much depth. Simple as when I'm happy, I'm happy, when I'm sad, I'm sad angry, I'm angry and so on. But in depth, when I'm happy physically, mentally I'm happy. And when I'm mentally happy it makes everything so good. It makes everything seem ok, and makes everything seem like one day it will be beautiful.

It's like that song "someday, things are gonna be easier... some day things will get brighter..." I don't know who it's by, but it's oldies. When I'm in the hall there is so much grief, so much faulty hostility, madness, sadness, anger that just comes from the people and the aura of the hall, so I mainly devote myself to my moods and keeping them as positive as possible.

I dedicate myself to it day and night. I know by reading, working out, studying biographies, The Bible, quotes from revolutionaries, etc. It all keeps my moods intact and healthy, I know by letting the wrongs things get to you, will do nothing good but demoralize you, make you feel smaller and smaller, and hurt you more and more.

When I think about it, and I'm not comparing my situation to anyone else's, but that it's in a way a blessing to be here when I think about what I was doing before I can here I wasn't in gangs, selling drugs, etc. I just wasn't doing anything.

And by being here by pushing God more and more into my life, I found that true ambition, and devotion to be me, to shine my light on the world in the most positive way, and to help everyone everywhere. We all need help, why not help each other. So that's my mood and I stick with it. And I hope we can all find that light within ourselves and find the ability to find something and stick to it, and spread it to the world.

-Rashaad, Alameda

From The Beat: This was a truly uplifting and inspiring piece, and we liked it so much that we looked up the original band that wrote that song (it's also been covered by everyone from folk singers like Beth Orton to R&B groups like Destiny's Child), and we found out that it was a family combo: Four brothers and one sister from Chicago. And get this: Their father was a police detective! Their name was "The Five Stairsteps". So our next question for you is, what are the five stairsteps you are going to take when you get out, so that you can do exactly what you say, and shine your light as bright as you can?

If These Walls Could Talk

If these walls could talk
I'm sure they'd cuss everyone out
If these walls could talk

...If the walls could talk they'd tell everyone how they feel

they'd say stop throwing stuff at me stop punching me, with you being stressed out don't you think I'm stressed on every day.

If these walls could talk they'd be very angry
'Cause these walls have it way worse then us
They've been here for years, in the same place for years, and will be here for years to come

Unless we come together and not look at them anymore.
These walls have seen the unthinkable.

Man, what these walls have seen... Man if these walls could talk.

-Nu Nu the System Victim, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for making us see the pain of the walls, standing by as helpless witnesses to suffering. They are like all the parents, family, loved ones, who have also watched, helplessly, as the people they cared about headed towards more pain. Wonderful, again.

*Silence hits the room, judge finally comes
Time has arrive to decide your fate*

Part One: Waiting Room

Tick Tock Tick Tock

Hears nothing but the clock

Ticking and tocking

Waiting for the time of the final judgment

Restricted to talk or make a movement

All you can do is just wait

Sitting there on that crate

A crate called a chair

Nothing but a stare

At that wooden door

Nothing but words of the all-knowing judge

The man who holds no grudge

Deciding your fate

To go to this place

Or just go home

For that taste of freedom

Time has finally come

To enter that door and face the outcome

Damn the pressure is killing

Like a poison deadly but chilling

Sitting on that chair next to the man whose trying to get you down

So they can get those bills

For their cribs in the hills

Silence hits the room, judge finally comes

Time has arrive to decide your fate

Now lets begin

But damn... I just ran out of lines

Part 2: The Court Room

Now let's begin

Words of the all knowing judge

The man who holds no grudge

Talking to the man

Trying to get a hand

On this sticky case

Lawyer on your side getting a little high

Trying get help you out

Talking to the judge saying nothing but fudge

So you can be free

Away from free

Judge thinking to set you free

The man comes in and slam his keys

Saying nothing positive

But only negative

Trying to get you down

So they can see that frown

Judge ponders his thoughts

The room is getting a little hot

Judge attacks with a negative

Nothing great worth calling positive

Sending you to this place

That will make you quake

Coming out full of hate

Hope for freedom has died nothing left to hide

But just do your time

Hope for one day to be free leaving the past behind

-Potter, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, Potter, you've really outdone yourself this time. It's amazing how a story that is so bad can still make us feel so good. Bad because we go through every bit of tension with you, as if we were there ourselves, good because your artist's voice has captured the truth of the moment and made it clear - like a diamond - for us all to see, feel and appreciate. Great writing as always...

The Mean Friend

It's always hard for me to truly tell people how I feel sometimes so that's my problem with having "mean friends."

My mean friend experience is with my girlfriend. I have been with her for so long that I guess I just go with whatever she says even if it's rude. For some reason, I can't say anything back to her. I wish I could but the words don't come out, even when I try. Although her words may hurt me, in my heart, I know she really does love me. I hate how everyone tells me I should leave her. That's something I can never do because as soon as she leaves I can already feel my heart break.

-Kenya, Alameda

From The Beat: It seems that you really love your girlfriend, even though she seems to be mean. You accept her as good or bad. We hope you also understand that if she really loves and accepts you, then she probably would like to hear your opinions.

Who Am I ?

Who am I today,

Is a female that has had a lot of time to think,

I have been thinking about life,

What I could of done before I got in here,

I should have been smart and stayed in the car,

Now I think,

When I get out I'm going to get back in school,

Get a job,

Do something with my life,

'Cause I know I have potential,

Before I was catting off,

Spending money on stupid things,

Sitting around,

Being lazy,

Sleeping,

Doing nothing.

I bet if I was active,

I wouldn't have ended up in here,

So to this day,

I am somebody,

And I'm going to prove,

TO EVERYBODY!

- Sharene, Alameda

From The Beat: Your poem was incredibly energizing and inspiring. We feel how hopeful and determined you are and we are sure many will feel the same when they read your words. From everyone to you: We can't wait for you to achieve your potential and own your inner strength.

Why I Am Here

Who got me in here? My decisions and myself. I had no fear for my position.

I took the choice to take a sip of the bottle, and take a hit of the green.

I am supposed to be a role model; I can't explain what I've seen. It had to do with my alcohol problem and hang'in with the wrong crew. I thought I was different from them, it feels like I have the flu.

Never listened to my family, I thought I was cool sporting my color. I could die in the streets instantly. I never cared about the law, just worried about partying.

My father crying 'cause of what he saw, use to think of killing, boxing all the haters and out there selling. Now that I think about it, it hurts my feelings.

- King Henry, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good to hear you know the wrongs you have done, and the people you have hurt while partying. Now it's time to grow up and change your ways of living before it's too late. The last thing you want is your father to get the dreadful call from the morgue.

No Good

When I was no good I used to be shady. I never cared what people thought. I just did ... that was my actions. Only thing I really was concerned about was me and my daughter and money, but what I should have done was just asked somebody to help me out because when I seen the police take my dad for nine years, I just started to do what I do.

No good is what my family was saying about me. I didn't care but I should have because I just missed a year of my daughter's life and that's how long she's been alive. That's one thing that hurts me, but I thought I was doing the right thing by risking my life selling rock cocaine, but it was no good. But now I see that as an irrelevant thing to do. I know it's no good 'cause I was no good, but now I see you can't live like that. But I should have asked for help or guidance ... now I'm 18 and wiser.

I don't think I need that guidance but I will need help so that I can support my daughter and myself. One thing I have learned is you have to give a little to get a little, that's why I'm not a dreadhead or going hella dumb but I still gig. But now I'm using my head for school and just for me to live and stay alive. Love you Faith, my one my only my flesh and blood from Daddy.

-Kob, Santa Clara

From The Beat: The most important sentiment in this piece is when you talk about asking for help. Sometimes that is the hardest thing to do and we would rather do illegal or shady things than just ask. Recognizing this shows you are well on the way to changing.

May I Never

Dirt sticks to my shoes as I run down the trail counting the number of steps I take – sure not to fail.

Not a distraction was the rain falling on my head.

It felt as if nothing could distract me from my task.

It seemed like miles as my thighs burned painfully.

There was a traffic of leaves floating in the air.

No kind of weather could stop me.

But I question the reason for these antics, and turn around.

Sitting on my doormat, I catch my breath.

Time to go inside. Lying on my bed I say to myself:

may I never pointlessly run in the shady night.

-Nicole, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow, good poem. And we would add, may you never do anything pointlessly, but do everything with purpose, and good intent.

My Change Speech

I have changed over the years and through all the change

I still stop and wonder if it made me a better person or a worse one.

But, I do believe that everything happens for a reason.

I went from a good student, kid, and sister,

To being a dummy that skipped school did drugs and

hated my body,

I abandon my brothers,

Hurt my mom like I didn't care.

I hurt the people who cared

And now I know will be away- in here.

I am sorry for what did cause it wasn't fair.

- Joshawn, Alameda

From The Beat: Whether you change for the better or worse, the most important thing is that you have come to recognize your family members' and friends' feelings. You now realize how much they care for you and how much they miss you being away. Thank you for sharing what you have learned about yourself with us.

The Maine Event: A Beat Within Interview

Beat: Everybody knows you but we're going to take it back Lil' Maine.

Maine: I was born in Oakland, CA. We was poor but not that poor. I live with my mother and 6 sisters and one brother.

Beat: Did you get into a lot of trouble when you were young?

Maine: I was cool 'til I hit 11. Then my mom lost her job and daddy ran out on us so I had to get some money for my family.

Beat: As a lil' kid who did you want to be like and why?

Maine: I want to be like Usher 'cause he had all the females then I want to be like the OG in my hood 'cause they had the money, car, everything I want.

Beat: How did you meet the other member of your crew?

Maine: We al grew up together, went to the same schools and shhh and our mothers grew up together so that's why we clicked so fast.

Beat: How hard was it for ya'll to get some Coke?

Maine: It wasn't that hard it took a moment then this OG ninja so we was about our shhh so he put us on.

Beat: We've been hearing you're going to CYA?

Maine: Yeah that's right a ninjas gotta go do 2 years and 3 months.

Beat: Will this be your first bid?

Maine: No this will not. I been here about 6 times this the longest I done.

Beat: So what are you facing right now?

Maine: Two years and 3 months in CYA

Beat: What did you do?

Maine: I don't want to go there.

Beat: What state of mind were you in when you did this crime?

Maine: I was going through a lot of shhh, and I was just like screw it let's get money.

Beat: How's the family life. Are you with both mother and father?

Maine: I'm with moms but I don't know were my fake ass father is.

Beat: Do you still live close to the hood?

Maine: Hell yeah I still live in the hood

Beat: How scary is it for you to finally get paper

Maine: I just want to be a kingpin, so ninjas can know I had nothing as a kid but look at me now.

Beat: Why do you feel that way?

Maine: 'Cause I grew up from nothing so I want to be something.

-Maine Bo, Alameda

From The Beat: Man, Maine Bo, this interview really showed a piece of your soul. We appreciate how honest and open you were. It's funny, but you say you want to be a kingpin so you can "be something." But you already are something - you're a strong, hurting young man who has seen and done too much darkness for his young life. And you are also an unwritten book, one that could end up in any way. BE SOMEBODY, like you say, but don't do it by becoming a slave to the idea that money is what makes a man. You deserve better.

Shawka Made Money

If I don't do nothin', I'ma ball.

I'm countin' all day like a clock on the wall.

Now go and get your money little duffle bag boy.

Now go and get your money little duffle bag boy, get money.

And I ain't eva ran from a ninja and I damn sure ain't 'bout to pick today to start runnin', Get money.

Said I ain't eva ran from a ninja and I damn sure ain't 'bout to pick today to start runnin', Get money.

Every day I used to be on the block.

Standin' on the corner with a mouth full of rocks.

So gone out my mind 'cause I've been drinkin', smokin hella shawk.

Been awake for a week bruh, it's really time to stop.

And I was only 12 years old so addicted to a drug that I don't want to get out my system.

And damn, how that shawk had a little ninja trippin', livin' my own world I wasn't eva tryna listen.

-Savioso, San Francisco

From The Beat: You have a good mind, Savioso, so you are able to see clearly (when you are sober) just where that life was leading. In fact, it's because you have a good mind that we hope you follow your own good advice, "it's really time to stop." Some people are not as blessed as you as far as brainpower is concerned, so why would you put something into your system that messes up the very thing that sets you apart? You may have made money doing it, but the only money you're making now is going into the system's pockets...

Way Back Memories

Once upon a time there was a kid named Jason, born 1991. 16 years old in 2007.

It was around the time of Christmas, Mexico City streets, singing, lights blinging. Don't remember it too well - almost like a blackout. Four years old.

What I remember... bouncing, bouncing. Where are we going, I ask, sitting in the back of a truck, topless, so dirt from the road smelled wet of rain. "To your grandma's." We arrive. Boom! It's like another blackout. I see my grandma and three others sitting and talking - not sure about what. Different city in Mexico. This time it's night. Many people going to church, kids running around outside...

Dad says: this is your mom. I look at the lady, a little shy, not sure what dad meant about it. I just barely met her. People selling necklaces. "Do you have parents?" "No." She gives me a necklace for free.

-Jason, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Fascinating story. Great style. Jason, you have talent. Here are two important things to remember: read a lot, and write a lot. All writers have a serious reading habit. That's how they learn what's good from what's mediocre. By reading voraciously and establishing a writing practice, you will get better and better. Trust us, you have potential. We hope you develop it.

Giving A Speech About Who You Are...

Who am I? A young man that trying to do right in life. I made mistakes on my part doing a stupid thing I was doing good, going to school and working, but made a wrong move.

Who am I? A young man with a big life that like having fun, treating my women right, engaged, making he right moves with her, but first taking care of the one you love. That's who I am.

Life is not a game. When you free be free. I go to court Thursday. I pray that I be free again. God send me a sign. I'll be out.

-Lil' Jer-Lala, San Francisco

From The Beat: It seems to us that you are on the right path. But we always have to wonder why young people who are on that path doing good suddenly make a "wrong move." What made you risk so much? How will avoid that mistake in the future?

Juvy Shoes

The shoes that I'm wearing right now aren't my favorite, but that's the price of being in juvenile hall. How I came to wear these shoes I will tell you in this story.

A male inmate here in this hall got mad and flooded his toilet. Water went into the hall and into the other rooms. One of the staff asked if anyone wanted to help, so I offered. I was wearing very loose, ugly, faded old jail shoes. I decided to do a good job cleaning up. In the process, the old ugly shoes got soaked. And as a result I got a new pair of comfy, slightly better looking shoes and they actually fit my feet.

-Nicole, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good deeds are usually rewarded, but not often as quickly and appropriately as this. Nice story.

Who Is Kevin?

On the block they would call me Lil' Cleotos.

When I used to be hella high, my ninjas say you look just like your brother. They used to call me Krazh when I start rapping earlier. I used to just stay robbing ninjas, poppin' pills, and just didn't care. Just was about my money, they said I was scandalous when I used to just short-stop on everybody on the block.

In Frisco I stay smashin' on the block. In Frisco I stay smashin' on all the knocks wit' my big bra. They said I go because I stay having new shhh and took care of my nieces and my ninjas.

Just getting in hella shhh and didn't care. Now since I been incarcerated I just had time to really get my mind right. Really start thinking about what I'm going do when I get out. Just been working on my mind, my body, and my brain. Learned how to start taking care of responsibilities, learning I could be my own push to exceed in life.

I don't need nobody just start really taking shhh, slow realizing what I've done. I know this for sure I am a change man I have really changed 360 in my life for the good. People be like "You gon' come back," but naw... I'm gon' change.

I ain't the child Jay no more I am too mature, ready for this world. Because if I can take this circumstances. I know I'm gon' make it in the world. I'm ready to let all that past shhh go and start something new in my life, 'cause I know I still got time to make it.

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece right here is an important first step - like you said, you're working out your mind, your body, your brain. Here's another exercise for your workout. Write out a goal you want to meet, and then write out five steps that it's going to take you to get there. Once you've broken that down, break down those steps again, into even smaller steps. Once you break it down to small steps, you'll find it even easier to build from success to more success.

Make My Mom Proud

W'a's up Beat Within? This Young Rac's just writing about me. In my life I just play sports. My favorite sport that I play is baseball. I'm trying to play for the MLB. My favorite team is the San Francisco Giants. The person that I look up to is Rich Aurilia. He is my favorite baseball player.

Most of the time I will be just kicking it in the streets day and night with my friends. I will never go home. But when I get out I'm going to start going to school every day and get good grades and make my mom proud. I thinking of going to church every day. I really want to change my life around I'm thinking instead of being all day in the streets, I'm going to have a job for I can get money and start buying my own stuff.

This all I write. Peace out Beat Within. Late!

-Young Rac's, San Francisco

From The Beat: We like what you wrote very much because it was filled with enough details to give us a sense of who you are and what you like to do. But it is difficult to read the way you wrote it because it was just one, long sentence without a single period. Here's some advice for anything you write: read it out loud before you hand it in. Every time your voice drops, that's a place to put a period. Your eyes will not catch those places, but your ears always will. Next time...

Disappointing Me And My Mom

Well I always wanted everything that I wanted, but my beautiful mother couldn't because she didn't have the money. She only had money for the things she needs but I always used to get mad because I guess I didn't really think about the things she used to use if for. Although I still wanted those things, she couldn't, so I started to do things I wasn't supposed to be doing.

My mom asked me where I got the stuff, but I never told her--but I knew she knew. One day she told me that if I do bad stuff, things will go wrong in life. She was right. Look at me now-- I'm locked up. But, she told me so. I had to learn my lesson the hard way, but I know things are going to get better because I know, in the future, they aren't going to be like this.

-Carlos, Alameda

From The Beat: It is understandably tough being a teen- you are still young and dependent on your parents to provide the material things that you want. Just know that you will be able to provide for yourself one day, when you are not locked up and find a job that you enjoy.

Moods Telling Me Who I Am

Sometimes, I really don't know who I am. I'm stuck in a rut, not even moving. All my goals are blank because I really don't know what to do or where to go. One thing, though, is that I got my inner-self. I get my good and bad times.

Every time I get a visit from my father, I see myself a failure. He looks into my eyes in disappointment. It gives me joy to see him, but I hate to see him leave. Most people are excited and jolly after a visit, except me. I got this hate in myself that I just can't function or control

It's a trip, though. I can't understand myself most of the time. But I do know one thing. It's all about me. I gotta commit myself to what I want and where I wanna get.

Another thing is my education. It's so important for me that I need to get as much as I can so when I go home I can conduct myself and continue to accomplish and improve my capability of my education. My moods need to stop telling me what to do.

-Chuccy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We think your focus on getting your education is exactly what you want to focus on. If you follow through on that goal, we think you will see something else in father's eyes... pride in his son.

Cosas En Las Prisiones

Cuando es tu primera vez en la carcel, te sientes muy deprimido y mas cuando tu PO es una persona insoportable. Creo que algunos PO no les importa como te sientas. Pareciera que ellos solo les gusta fastidiar a ti y a tu familia.

Cuando pasan estas cosas lo que hago es dormir o leer la biblia. Una opinión que tengo es que creo que los oficiales de policia no deberían de tratar a nuestros padres como delincuentes, diciendoles que no nos traigan a los Estados Unidos.

Sabemos que todos venimos por nuestra propia cuenta, sin crearles ningún tipo de presión o intimidandole al decirle que sus hijos estan en graves problemas con la posibilidad que le nazcas raices en la cárcel.

Lo que me preocupa más ahora es mi madre porque ella está muy lejos y preocupada porque piensa que voy a estar aqui un buen tiempo. Ella no saben como me tratan.

Estoy triste y deprimido. Me meto a mi cama, me duermo y despues cuando despierto me vuelvo a deprimir al ver que sigo entre estas paredes. Lo bueno es que las prisiones de aqui no son tan malas como las de Honduras. Como dice la cansión, "aunque la prisión sea de oro no deja de ser prisión." La prisión me ha servido para reflexionar sobre las cosas buenas y malas que he estado haciendo en la calle.

Cuando salga, me voy a dedicar a mi familia, pero si me tratan mal, voy a volver a la calle otra vez. Mi Padilla me trata bien.

Les digo un consejo, porfavor no vuelvan a la calle y no rifen. Esos colores son estupidos. No sean pendejos. Todos somos la misma raza. Todos somos Latinos y debemos unirnos para una causa que nos beneficie a todos los Latinos en los EEUU y a toda America. Por favor demos un buen ejemplo de cultura, education, principios y de hermanos. Esperamos que Dios nos cuide a todos.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho la situación en la que te encuentras. Deseamos que las cosas mejoren para ti. ¿Dinos una cosa, si piensas que las pandillas son estupidas, porque regresarias a una de ellas? Te recomendamos que luches mucho en mantenerte alejado de esa pandilla que dices que te trata bien antes que termines en peor situación. En la otra mano, si no te gusta como son corridas las prisiones, no seas parte de ellas. Gracias por tus palabras y esperamos que tu mismo aprendas de tus palabras.

Things In Prison

When you're locked up for the first time, you feel very depressed and especially when your PO is an unbearable person. I think some PO's don't care how you feel. I think they just like to bother you and your family.

When things like this happens, what I do is to sleep or read the Bible. From my opinion, I believe that PO's shouldn't treat our parents as if they were criminals by asking them why they brought us to the US.

We all come here on our own, without causing any type of pressure, or trying to intimidate others by saying that their kids might spend the rest of their lives in jail.

What worries me now is my mother who is very far away from me. It worries me that she think that I'm going to be here for a very long time. She doesn't know how they treat me.

I'm sad and depressed. I get in bed, sleep and when I wake up I get sad again to see that I'm still stuck in between these walls. The only good thing is that prisons in here aren't as messed up as the ones in Honduras. It's like this song, "even if this prison is made of gold, it doesn't avoid the fact that it is a prison." This place has helped me reflect about the good and bad things I'm doing on the streets.

When I get out, I'm going to dedicate my time to my family, but if they treat me bad, I'll go back to my click. My gang teats me well.

Let me give you an advice, please don't go back to the streets and stop claiming a gang. Those colors are stupid. Don't be stupid. We all belong to the same race. We are all Latinos and we would get united to a cause that can benefit all Latinos in the US and in America. Please, lets set a good example of culture, education, principles and brotherhood. I hope God takes care of you all.

-Francisco, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're sorry for your situation you find yourself in and we wish things to get better for you. Tell us one thing, if you think that gangs are stupid, why would you come back to one like you've said in your writing? We recommend you to fight hard in avoiding the gang that supposedly treats you well before you end up in a worst situation. If you don't like how things are ran in prison, don't be part of it. Thanks for your words and we hope you learn from those exact words.

Think Positive

Your mood can change everything about you, it can change your whole outlook on life, which means if you're always in a bad mood then your most likely to make poor decisions, and your never going to get anything positive out of life until you change your attitude.

People sometimes find themselves wondering why they can't get an education, or why they can't get a job, why they can't seem to stay out of jail, well, if you take the time to re-adjust your mood and your attitude you probably could accomplish a whole lot of things that would better your self and others, 'cause walking around in a negative mood your not going to get anything but what you put into it.

So with a negative mood then you get negative, negative, and more negative. Positive mood you get good, better, and greater things. So if you find yourself in a bad situation it's only because of you and your mood, remember that.

-Lil' Will, Alameda

From The Beat: Nice insight to the "mood" topic. Give us example from your own life when you were feeling down, how did you turn that around?

Who I Am Today

If I was giving a speech about who I am today, I would introduce myself to the people 'cause they may not know me, so I would start off saying "Hello everybody. Some of ya may not know me, but my name is Lorenzo...."

Before I got locked up, I was a regular person hanging around outside wit' my friends. Before I got locked up, I used to be going to school and do what I have to do and go home after school and do my homework.

When I'm at home I be in my room playin' Madden '08 for Playstation 2. I was different before I got locked up 'cause I can do anything I want when I'm out, but I'm in here, so I can't do anything I want. When I'm here you have to do what the staff say. Some of the staff in here be talking too much shhh. I didn't have to do that much stuff when I was at home wit' my mom.

-Lorenzo, Alameda

From The Beat: You paint a picture of a normal, teenage life. Obviously, your arrest changed all that. You miss your freedom now, and the easier life you had at home. Hopefully this will be a learning experience for you. What can you change in your life to make sure that you don't have to go through the experience of being a detainee again?

You Can't Run A Marathon In Vandals

A fresh pair of white, purple, orange, green, blue and yellow sticking.

I hit the block in a fresh pair of vandals high tops with the strap around the ankle. But to get through life I gotta walk through the grass... damn I got grass stains on my shoes.

Man then I gotta walk through dirt... I'm too busy making sure my pants don't get messed up.

Ahhh I take a look at shoes, oh I'm feelin' about super filthy. Man okay, okay I got this. I'm gonna hit the mall and get some new shoes but all the malls are closed, damn.

That's how like is you can't just get a new one, but you can change (if you allow yourself to)

Now if I would've been going to church, all the malls would have been crackin'.

-Nu Nu the System Victim

From The Beat: Once again, you prove that you can make us cry, you can make us laugh, and mostly you can make us think. One of these days, you're going to have to take the word "Victim" out of your signature, because you, are no victim.

No More Dumb Shhh

Before I came in here, I didn't really care what I did or what was going on. I just acted without thinking, like if somebody was like "Ey, you want to go come up," I would be like "Let's go!" Didn't even think about the consequences.

But now I'm not doing no more dumb shhh because I ain't coming back here. When I get out I'm going to get what I need to get done, and stay the hell out of dumb ninjas' way, handle ma business the way it needs to be handled, finish school, finish football, finish basketball to keep me occupied and off the streets... and finish dropping by at a place I used to go.

-Tay B, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire your determination to change the direction you were traveling in — seeing where it leads. We think your plan to finish school and do your sports is exactly the right thing to do, and we wish you good luck. Don't disappoint yourself.

To Tell You The Truth

It crazy how family friends & sometimes even staff want you to be somebody you never thought you would be in life. They try to tell you what to do, even try to tell you how to talk, but the truth is I don't think nobody can make you change but your self.

Like I said family friends& sometime even staff try to tell you what to do and what not to do, they even tell you, you should be like somebody you never thought you would be like.

They might do it to help you, maybe even try to change you, but sometimes I get tired of listenin' to other people tryin to tell me what's good for me and what's not.

Don't get me wrong I respect all who stay tryin' to give me some info on how my life should be ran. But I hate people that every time you see them they tellin' you the same old same old. I'm not tryin to be disrespectful, but I heard it clear as day the 1st and 2nd time you told me. I don't need to hear the same thing numerous times.

...Or maybe I do.

-Meech Boy, Alameda

From The Beat: We liked this so much we're going to answer you with a poem written by a great poet from more than a thousand years ago, Rumi. "You have lost your camel, my friend, and all around you, people are full of advice/You don't know where your camel is/but you do know that these casual directions/are wrong." It's true — only you can find your way, no one else. So tell us, where is your way?

Mind Games

Mind Games

As you take a trip through my mind
It's all burning flames
you will find flames burning through my eyes that can't be put out. It is the struggle and hatred that it's all about.

Dark heavy clouds are covering my soul inside
That's taking the ultimate roller coaster ride

And got my brain stretching wide,

Trippin' off my enemies

Forgetting all my memories

But on the other days

It seems so dreadful and sad

Every time I think of these walls I get mad

Because it feels like they're closing in more and more

And my feet start sinking deeper into the floor

It's like I'm stuck in this game I play

Phew does my mind have to think this way.

-Tayana, Alameda

From The Beat: The truth is that both the streets and the hall have terrible ugliness in them, and maybe just by writing it down, it might help to make something beautiful out of the ugliness. Why? Because it makes your readers feel connected to you and your meaning — and there's nothing more beautiful than that connection. It's what makes us human.

Who I Am?

Who I am

Born into a non-english speaking family known for traffickin'

Who I am

Raised amongst cold blooded, heartless men

Who I am

My few role models are locked down in the pen

Who I am

Age of twelve already chasin' a life of sin

Who I am

Mind state survival of the fittest so I don't come up missin'

Who I am

Taught how to jump behind a stove and cook things that have never been taught in a culinary kitchen

Who I am

Late night not only hearin' gun shots but feelin' bullets whiz by my head

Who I am

Seen things that would make a sane man lose his head

Who am I

fascinated by guns and the burnin' sensation of a pistol lead

Who am I

Fighting demons and hoppin' out of bed

Who am I

Fightin' a war that neither side will ever win

Who am I

Tried to change once but couldn't find no end

Who am I

Blessed with a daughter so this battle I must win

Who I am

Someone please help me understand

-Kastro, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Who are you? You are all these things, as you already know. But you are also someone else, which is a person with talents, insight and heart that can serve you in any career you choose, especially a legit one. Talent like this shouldn't just be kites from deep within the system, they should be front page news, college scholarship-winning essays, poems that get read aloud on the radio.... Maybe that's the secret, if you keep putting your darkest ideas on paper, you won't be so tempted to act them out on the streets?

Be Aware

The wolves come out at night
 The zombies come out to fight
 The world is in a fight
 People runnin' as fast as light
 The moon darkens yellow
 Nobody stops to say hello
 No Hi or Goodbye
 Just a stare a glare a glower
 Do you feel this enormous power
 It's immaculate
 Gorgeous
 But so death-defying
 Witches flying
 But don't be scared
 Just be aware
 It's Halloween
 Enjoy it
 But don't trust no one in a costume
 Not even the little ones that go do' to do'
 Sangin the Halloween tone
 Trick or treat, smell my feet
 Give me something good to eat
 Watch for signs of the tricks that's treatin'
 If you know what I mean
 Stay away
 It's the danger zone
 Where the unknown becomes the known
 And the known becomes the unknown
 All candy ain't a treat, some ain't sweet
 Kids snicker wit' snickers in they mouth
 Betta watch that
 Something walks pass you
 Is it a black cat
 Or a fat rat
 Maybe a blind bat
 But don't jump back
 You should've been aware
 Don't walk like you don't care
 Walk wit' the kids at Halloween
 Watch out for the dope fiends
 'Cause they everywhere
 You could smell 'em in the air
 Don't be fooled by a haunted houses
 Or a skeleton --that skeleton might be a knock
 On the block duckin' on cops
 One more thing all doors ain't doors
 Just think about yours.
 Be safe happy early Halloween fam.

-Boe, Alameda

From The Beat: With another one of your brilliant, lyrical flows, you prove what every ghetto child knows/That monsters and vampires and ghosts aren't real/Compared to the terror the streets make you feel/What's a witch or a spook or a mask that says boo!/When the gunshots come 'round every night around you?

*don't jump back
 You should've been aware
 Don't walk like
 you don't care*

Who Am I?

That's a hard question. That's like asking "What is love?"

I guess one answer is that we're an accumulation of our experiences, but maybe there's something more. We are also the choices we make. But what about when we are locked up and not in control of our experiences?

What about when we don't have a choice? Or it's a choice between two evils? And when two people are faced with the same choice, why do we chose differently? Do we have a soul, or could we just mechanical? Could a robot do a better job?

Some guy said "I think therefore I am" but "aren't" rocks? The difference between a man and a animal is that when a man thinks, he recognizes his thought. He thinks, and then knows he has thought.

So I know that I reflect on my thoughts, therefore I think I am. But this elusive "I": is it the real or is it a concept introduced by man? Again, "aren't" rocks? But they, like animals don't know that they "are".

I think that the reflections that "I" (If such a creature exists) have are too confusing for me to continue, therefore I stop.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: OK, the only thing we know for sure, after reading these existential ruminations, is that you belong in college, not jail. We think positive, therefore we are positive, that you must do everything you can to make sure that you continue meditating, studying and feeding this powerful mind of yours. As for making choices, you do have choices, even though you're in jail. For example, you chose to write a piece for The Beat, right? And you chose to speak on your life, right? We all have more power than we think.

Armed Robbery

Armed robbery, but man I didn't do it
 Armed robbery but man I didn't do it
 Armed robbery but man I didn't do it
 But for some reason the Judge don't believe I didn't do it

I been down for ten months trying to prove I did not do it, "punk" brotha blamed me and his stray, he's stickin' to it. December 3rd 2006 is when this all happened. I remember it like it was yesterday, so I'm just gonna rap it.

My life was goin' good, almost make it off parole now I'm locked down goin' crazy in this hell hole.

I swear too God when he robbed that lady I had no control,

And deep down in my heart I knew five-o was patrolin', But I chose to ride, not knowin' the whip was stolen, He hopped out the cuts, with the steel he was holdin'.

He walked toward the lady and the gun came out, I was sidetracked, I didn't even hear her shout.

He hopped in her truck brotha rolled, rolled out I got in the driver seat off his Yukon headin' home

I got pulled over, it was like a nightmare
 Two hours before

I was holdin' my baby girl, brushin' her hair
 Now at night I stay up and stare out my window missin' my baby

I can't wait to get out of jail it's to shady
 She's eighteen months and I miss her too death
 Talkin' 'bout it's painful so I'm gonna put it to rest

- Lil' Currupt-one, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: whether or not you pulled the gun or took the lady's truck, you were there, and you knew what was going down moments before it happened. Think of what's more important to you - your "homies" or your eighteen month old girl?

Why?

Why did I make the choices that got me here today?

Why did I steal that car?

Why did I rob that house?

Why did I smoke weed?

Why did I start gangbanging?

Why did I lie?

Why did I hurt so many people?

Why did I disrespect everyone that tried to help me?

Why did God put me on earth
if life was going to be so hard?

I wish I knew the answers to these questions before I
chose to do these things, maybe I wouldn't be in jail
today.

-Convict

From The Beat: We bet you knew the answers, you just didn't want to take the time to think your choices through. Now you know how to use your head!

Who Am I?

When I'm locked up it's like I don't know who I am. It's like when I am on the streets. I'm Little Mike Mike. I be trying to change but when I be trying to be as good as I can be, I be getting in trouble all the time. But when I get out I'm going to try my hardest to not go to jail this time.

-Michael

From The Beat: Trying your hardest is good. What will you do to not return?

This Is It!

What's up Beat, this is Convict writing in The Beat again, I'm still here in jail. I've been here three-and-a-half-months now, I still have two-and-a-half-months to go. Then I go to R.O.P.

I'm a little excited to go, but I know it will be hard, because I've heard that you have to do a lot to get through this program. I know it will be hard, but if I give my all, and try my hardest, then I should be able to get through it.

I have to get through this program and if I don't I go to CYA. They told me this in court.

I have serious charges, I've been to jail five times, they (the courts) told me I've had too many chances and this is my last one. So I have to make the best of this program. I'm doing the best I can to do good and change my life around.

-Convict

From The Beat: Once again, we sense a young man who is on a mission, willing to do whatever it takes to get up and out of the system. We know you are someone who will thrive and succeed doing a hard program

My Moods Change Me All Day

My moods change me all day. If I'm in a good mood then I'm a nicer person, but if I'm in a bad mood it's bad. And it's easy to change my mood. That's something I got to change. But fa' my ninjas, it's harder to change my mood 'cause I know 'em but if I don't know you I'll get more mad faster.

I think your mood is everythin', 'cause your mood could mess up your whole day, or your whole life!

-Marley

From The Beat: Do you feel like you're mood controls you? Or are you figuring out new ways of dealing with it (writing to relieve stress, counting to ten, all those things they teach in anger management?). Maybe it's not about changing your mood, just about making sure that your mood doesn't change you!

I Lost It

How do my moods change me when I'm mad, well I remember I was in class when some kid was talking shhh and I didn't care so I took off on him.

-Rodolfo

From The Beat: Not good. Need to learn how to walk away and control your anger.

I Got To Be A Man

What's up Beat, it's your homie Smokey from Hayward coming to you from behind these Alaco walls. Once again I'm a be off topic today so you can hear what I got to say or you could just put it aside. Never the less I'm going to express myself on some stuff.

Well about four and a half months ago I got released from this exact unit to Santa Rosa to a group home. My daughter Selena was sick and they wouldn't let me call her so I got worried so I ran I left and got my lady and my daughter and moved all of us out to San Fernando Valley. After a few days of being with my baby girl and my lady, I looked at my daughter and I told myself that everything that I've been doing ain't worth more than my daughter.

Now I got to be a man. Now I got a little girl to take care of I'll be locked up for 8 months, till I'm 18...so all I can do now is think about my daughter. But the least I can do is change for her. And that is my plan. I can't wait to see my baby girl but till then all I can do is what I what I need to do so I can see my daughter.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Off topic? No way, this is straight on topic, to what The Beat is all about: Heart. The system breeds hate, the streets breed hate, but you found something stronger: Love. And when you're man enough to let yourself feel it, Love beats hate every single time. We hope you and Selena are reunited soon, because she needs her daddy and her daddy needs her!

No Change In My Mood

Actually my moods don't change me,

They only change my demeanor.

I just sometimes stay in my room and don't want to be bothered.

Some people I react different to and others I stay cool with.

- Protective mood

From the Beat: It is interesting that you point out how moods don't make you a different person. Rather, your moods temporarily change your attitude towards your surrounding.

Who I Was

I was a person that used to always steal and lie everyday. I use to disrespect everyone around me. I used to not listen to nobody, and do what I felt was right. I used to cuss people out and disrespect my family and other people that tried to help me in life. I used to smoke weed, drink and run the streets all night.

Now, today, I've changed my life around. I do everything different now. I changed only six months ago and my life has been better, and I have a lot more respect from my family and other people.

Some people still don't like me but that's the way life goes. I'm just trying to keep doing good before it's too late.

-Convict

From The Beat: Oh Convict you have our support to the fullest, as long as you stick to living a legit life free of your evil ways. It's not going to be easy upon getting out, but if you maintain your leadership abilities, you'll have a better chance, than being a just 'chillin' kinda homie."

Fake

In this game who can you trust?
When everybody filled wit' envy and lust
Either you stand tall or get crushed
Yo' friends wanna see you hushed
Situations like this make packing a gun a must
Nowadays you can't even get big
Without everybody and they mama comin' at yo' wig
Ninjas pickin' a spot for your grave to dig
Talkin' like they solid when they work for the pig
Everybody thinks that friendship is so great
When the majority of the ninjas you wit' hate
They also anticipate
Plottin' for the day to see you break
But that's the ways of the snake
They hate to see you ball
Laugh and celebrate when you fall
Yo' own ninjas is larceny hearted
Quick to leave, stankin' like somebody farted
Everybody wanna pack a gun and kill
These be the first ninjas to run and squeal
Always talking like they real
But why you on the paperwork with a deal
I just want ya'll to think about that
Because the lowest creature on earth is a rat.

-Big Wayne

From The Beat: This is perhaps the ugliest part of the game - not just the violence, not the jail time, but the way it sets people up to hate each other, betray each other. Humans are like any other animal - when they're put to the test they will tear each other up for survival. Your poem paints the dark, real picture of the set up that destroys our cities, turns brother against brother, friend against friend, neighbor against neighbor.

Happy And Sad

When I'm in a good mood I am very active and energetic.
But when I in a bad mood I'm very gloomy and depressed
and I wanna stay in the house all day.

-Bobby

From The Beat: Makes great sense what you write.

Changed Man

My name is Roger. I am a young teen. The reason why I'm locked up in Juvenile Hall is because I shot some kids in the head with a CO2 BB Gun, and now I'm here. So your probably thinking that I am a mean person because of it, but you're wrong.

I use to have a bit of anger problem, now since I am in here I'm sure that I will do a lot better on the outs. I hate this place. I hope I get out when I go to court in two days. Since I hate this place I will do my best to stay out of here. One of my main goals is to turn my life around the second I get out.

-Roger

From The Beat: We hope all it takes is this taste of juvenile for you to control your self, otherwise we'll see you again. What will you do to turn your young life around?

How Do Your Moods Change You

I think the way people's moods change is when someone disrespects another, like for example if someone called me a disrespectful name I would want to go off on them.

-Ahmed

From The Beat: You know the saying, "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me?" Try walking away!

Detention Anger

Hey was up my name is Ernesto and I am mad because I got detained until October 23 and seems a little long for me. The judge didn't let me go because my probation officer told my mom that she had to move so she could let me out and that's why I am mad.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Well, we hope by the time this gets out, your mom is settled and you are free doing well! Is this possible? What must you avoid to not return to juvenile?

A Friend and A Mean Friend

Shhh, a mean friend.

What's a mean friend to me? Hmmm...I guess my definition to me is a person who mistreats his or her associate or friend or whatever you wanna call it. A mean friend is someone who is a bad character of a friend before asking what's a mean friend you should ask yourself what's a friend. A friend is a trustworthy opponent.

A person you could talk to when da time came. A person to have a friendly friendship with. A person you could do shhh with, go on adventures with and shhh like that. That's my definition of a friend. Back to that mean stuff...

A mean friend is a person you can't talk to. A person as if you try to have a conversation, he'll take the conversation to another level or turn it negative. I don't mess with friends though. Nah, but I got probably four real friends I could call my real ninjas.

I got a lot of talkin' to buddies though. But I'm getting' off topic. Ninja this my definition of a mean and good friend.

There's more but I can't think of nothin' else right now.

-Boe

From The Beat: Is a friend also someone that you can count on to tell you the truth, even when it's what you don't want to hear? A friend who has the courage to point out when you are doing wrong? What's the difference, in your mind, between a friend and a co-partner?

Five Times The Charm!?

This BJ this is my fifth time in jail, first time in this new institution. I been here for a month and got 2 weeks before court. They already said I'll be going to camp for six months, man!!! Well I guess I'll just have to relax for six months, no deal, only thing is, I'll miss my mom, man!

-Bj

From The Beat: We hope you do more than relax!! Seriously, get busy!! Start reading, writing and getting your education on. The time is now to prepare for a better life!!

My Lessons

Ever since I been in here I learned a lot a things. One of them not to hang around crowds. The other one is when I am with my friends don't do bad stuff.

Before I did not want to go to school, now I learned if you don't go to school you will be up in here because you're going to stop doing the right things.

When I get out I am going to go back to school and do all the stuff I have to, to not come back in here because it feels like you're in hell, but your not burning.

If I was y'all do good stuff and go back to school and you will not come here because you always got stuff to do and don't do bad stuff because you will be locked up.

-Charles

From The Beat: Good advice. We hope you follow your words and get right back into school and stay busy when not in school too!

What I Know So Far

I am that ninja people don't even know who they are. To tell you the truth I don't completely know who I am.

What I know so far is that I got high goals. I am a smart, intelligent young man. I know how to take care of myself and take responsibility for my actions. I am a ninja that knows how to get money and get b****. I'm a wet and solid ninja. I know how to do me. Most ninjas be trying to be other ninjas.

You ninjas be ya'll self dog. Fake ass ninjas be trying to be like other people... be yourself. I'm a ninja that do my thang and be myself.

I'm also someone that get active. My other side I'm am a person that wants to succeed in life and have a kid. I want to have a good family and live my life and I stay active.

-Roland

From The Beat: William Shakespeare, perhaps the greatest poet in the history of the English language (so far, maybe a Beat writer will step in and take his crown one day), said something similar: He said "Above all, to thine own self be true." But if by being "active" you mean doing dirt, is that being true to the best in you?

Thizzin'

What's up with it Beat, my topic is about moods I be in . First of all I be in a pissed off mood because someone in

It's like when people thizz, they mind go wild, they get that thang and go POW! I thin it's stupid they get fudged off they go all stupid. I mean did it a copula times and I liked it but it seemed like my mind went crazy. I mean my eyes was all puffed up I looked like a pill dope fiend.

-Eric

From The Beat: Popping pills has caused a lot of suffering, death, fighting, and drama. It's good to hear that you're done with it. Is there other stuff you've done in your life that you've "had enough" of? Like what?

What Is Love?

What is love...

People think a relationship is love
Love is a strong word that could also break you
When you find someone special

Do you believe that's love?

'Cause guess what...

I don't

I don't think you can (at least in my eyes)

The only place you can find love...

Is in your heart

When your down...

Who do you turn to for love?

Me, I turn to myself because I, my,

Love...

Is very deep within!

Now why I don't think it's love...

Because many people fail to try

Fake lovers tell you lies

When I find love...

I want to find it in all the right places

I've been hurt so many times...

I feel love will never come my way

But what I do know...

My love will be cherished and found

Someday!

-Taryn

From The Beat: The love you have to offer to another seems to be very powerful and deserves someone who will be able to respect and cherish that love. In the meantime, continue to love yourself. That's the love that will protect you from harm.

A New Me

Today, I have changed since I got locked up. When I got locked up I was a person who like to pick on people. I would want to fight them if they looked at me wrong. Today I think there is no point to fight someone who looks at you wrong.

I think what make a person mean, is if you don't have any one there for you. If you never had anyone to have your back. And if you are depressed you might be a mean person

When I am in a mood I could be in one state of mind and get ticked off and be totally pissed off all in a split second.

-Rudy

From The Beat: Appreciate your thoughts on our topics! Sounds to us like in the few words you write you are getting your life back on track. What's your plan upon getting out of juvenile?

RIP Ant

RIP, HB original Ant

My love, my heart, my world

Wanted by all, love by most, hated by many

Here for everybody.

They might've taken you out, and that's no doubt.

Now I'm in juvi don't even know when I'm getting out.

I know you near but wish you were here.

'Cause if you were, I wouldn't be in here.

They need to free me,

So I can be back on the block,

Though it's hard standing were my hubby got shot

I love you baby, yo' wifey.

-Tete

From The Beat: We feel your sorrow and your disappointment. We are sorry for your loss and wonder if the many who you think hate you simply misunderstand you?

Almost Clear

Before I went to jail I was off serious dope, so really that was controlling my emotions. So I can say I was a very silent person but did hella shhh. And only kicked it wit' people that was on the same hype.

But now the drugs is almost clear so I'm kinda thinking again for the first time. So I'm talking to a lot of new people.

I try to keep my mood the same no matter who in front of me.

-Carter

From The Beat: It's like that song "I can see clearly now the rain is gone" only in your case "I can see clearly now the drug is gone." And it's the same because that's what was keeping you in the dark ... now that you have more clarity, what do you see? What kinds of goals, what kind of a future?

Friends Are Traders

I had a friend that I thought would have my back to the fullest. We used to smoke weed together, go to parties together, sell drugs together, everything. But I got into some funk with another crew, and my so-called "friend" was cool with.

I told him what was going on and he told me I was on my own, because he was kickin' it with this crew before he even met me. But that's what happens when you put so much trust into people.

-Convict

From The Beat: Nice example, especially when it comes to having friends who also deal with the criminal justice system, various hoods, and illegal activities.

Is Respect To Much

What it is Beat. This is Derrick. I always wanted my father to respect me. He sees me as a child and what I say doesn't matter. I want him to respect my mind. I have a brain too. We all have mature thoughts on certain topics all I want is respect. Later Beat.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Right on! Being a parent is tough though. Imagine yourself being a parent, at the same time, being a friend to your child. It's a challenge to create a good balance. Keep respecting yourself and give your father the respect he deserves. Maybe you'll be able to do it better, someday, with your child.

These Songs

What's good, you know me, just livin' each day as if it were my last but at the same time preparing myself for the future. But look though, you ask me about songs that have impacted my life and here are a couple, and the reasons why:

1. "Song for Mama" - Boyz II Men

"Mama, mama, you know I love you, mama, mama you're the queen of my heart, your love is like tears from the start, mama I just want you to know loving you is like food to my soul"

If it weren't for my mother I wouldn't be living for today.

There are some folks in my life that I wish weren't there I really haven't had my biological mother in my life the way I've wanted, and there's a hole in my heart because of this. But I can't hate her, because she's mine, even when I don't want her to be.

I personally believe that if it weren't for her I would know as much as I know today. That's why she's the food to my soul. May God bless her until life has its end.

2. "Praise Is What I Do"

"And I vow to praise you, through the good and the bad/ I'll praise you whether happy or sad/And I'll praise you in all that I go through/Because praise is what I do and I owe it all to you."

I claim the lord Jesus Christ as my savior and I believe that it is through all things that Christ strengthens me. Through all my trial and tribulations, I see my self as a lock and resilience is the key that unlocks the door, so that I can get out of tough situations.

3. "Baby Don't Go" -- Fabulous ft. T-Pain

"I want my baby back/Said I thought it would be easy but it's hard for me to let you go. Baby don't go x4"

In this case, my baby is my freedom. Every time I come to JH I let go of my freedom, and sometimes I take easy and sav' out programs where as other times I do the fool. But now I've grown to see that I have to always be the bigger person in tough situations, even though the battle is eternal.

And, last but not least...

4. "I Wish..." R. Kelly

I wish that I could hold you now, I wish that I could touch you now, I wish that I could talk to you be with you some how, I know you're in a better place. Even though I can't see your face I know you're smiling down on me saying everything is okay.

I've lost a lot of people in my lifetime and everything positive that I do is in remembrance of the people I love. The people that I've lost are the ones that I call my heroes.

May God rest their souls.

-Nu Nu the System Victim

From The Beat: All four of these songs show the love and hope you have inside you, and the strength that will take you through your pain. So why do you kick off by saying that you live every day as if it's your last? What would happen if you looked at it through the lens of the music that comforts you, and began to live each day as if it was your first, instead?

Angry And Happy Mood

How do my moods change me?

Well, when I'm angry

I take my moods out on other people

Like I'm mad at the world.

When I'm sad I ignore people.

When both emotions are put together...

I make bad choices.

When I'm happy,

My mood changes me

I seem to loan stuff because

Money, clothes,

Even my favorite shoes keep me in that mood

and I pass it on...

Let's see how good your luck will be.

- Je Je

From The Beat: You are human with all of your emotions...and you are a generous human to pass on your good times and good fortune.

Mean Friends

This BJ again telling y'all 'bout mean friends. I don't have 'em but I know exactly how they work, maybe because I have had mean friends before. Maybe because sometimes they're just not in a mood, or maybe they've been turned on in the past by friends. Sometimes growin' up it's hard to trust people because too many people have been crossed, I was in a dice game and was almost killed by one of my closet friends this summer, a lot of times friends cannot be trusted It's just the way some things go.

-Bj

From The Beat: Living a life on the edge with other youngsters will only cause pain and non trusting friends. DO you think you can leave that old lifestyle and get on a safer path? We know it's easier said than done, but we hope you give it a try!

My Love

My dream, my queen, my shining star

I blow kisses to you, wherever you are

My love, my soul, my future wife

My heart is complete with something nice

When I came to jail, you cried me a river

I'll be back, baby girl, just always remember

I can't wait to get to hold you tight, my chiquita

-Chino

From The Beat: This is a nice love poem, but remember: you let her down when you got arrested. If you are serious about getting into a long-term relationship with your lady, you have to change your ways!

A Criminal Type of Mind

Before I came into the Juvenile Hall I had a criminal type of mind. But every day I spend in here gave me enough time to think about where my father was leading to. I thought about business, what to work for. I am looking forward to changing my life around.

I am going to pick out my stuff more carefully. And watch out for the cars I ride in. My mood is easy to control but every time I go in my cell room it builds up and sometimes I lose it, but on the outside I could control it.

-Edward

From The Beat: It's good that when you're in your cell, you let those feelings out and express them. It means that you control your mood, and don't let your moods control you!

Bad Mood

For example if I'm and a bad mood, I am mad at everybody that's around me, I might tell them not to talk to me and they still do and they know I'm mad and they know how I get when I'm mad and they still want to ask me questions, then I get even madder and start cussing and fussing.

Sometimes when my family know that I'm mad they just won't say anything to me are try to get back and good mood by giving me something or doing things with me such as taking me somewhere else so that I can cool off, and sometimes it works, well most of the time it works. But if I was in a good mood nothing like that would never happen.

- Malika

From The Beat: This is a very insightful piece to your moods and what works and doesn't work when you are feeling bad.

Me And My Moods

How my moods change me... Well that's easy because if I'm in a good mood, then I can be your best friend. I will even give you 5 or 10 dollars if I'm in a great mood. I can also help people with problems and more. I can help around the house and when I go to school, I am very friendly to everyone, even the people I don't know. But, if I am angry and in a very bad mood, get as far as you can away from me.

My opinion about my angry mood is that I act like a devil. If you don't want your feelings hurt, then I suggest that you stay back. When I'm angry and in that mood, I don't want to be bothered. Many moods are okay and change me into a good person except for being angry. That's when you stay away and don't say a word to me.

-Neonchie

From The Beat: Got the message! How often do you get into that bad mood? When you are in a good mood you seem to be a ray of sunshine to yourself and many others around you.

Who I am For Real

Me. I'm savage, yeah

Like beauty and the beast...

Well, I'm beauty because I am very pretty and very talented

In my future there's hope

But at the same time...

Hell yeah!

I'm a beast

I've got a type of personality where if your cool...

I'll leave a good impression

But if you're a punk-rock-ass and snitchin'

Then, I'm gonna leave an impression that you'll never forget

To be honest, I'm not a mean female at all.

I can be very kind and loving at the same time that I can be a beast.

I think about the people around me and to be truthful

I'm too dang bossy to be in "jail"

Keep your mouth shut if you can't say nice things to me

'Cause I'll turn straight into a beast

But, more than likely I'll keep my beauty 'till I die...

- Lil' Walker

From The Beat: Would you be willing to use your talent and your beauty to help others? Your beastly side seems to come out when you need to be protected from being hurt or judged. But, if you really believe that you are beautiful, from the inside out, you won't need to call out the dogs / beast. You can simply BE.

What I See

Everybody from the hood
In their own way

And every young thug
Is a "G" in their own world

Half of society see the streets
As their way of leaving

young traps see the stroll
as they way of getting it

young dope dealer see the
cocaine as the way to eat

but we fail to realize
the life we choose to leave
doesn't get inside the economy
we get attracted to the fast money
ways hoes get attracted to the sin
stiletoes

way the old "G" put the pedal to the medal
might pull out the steal
if it's a real need to kill

my name is Kamesh and I'm just keepin' it real

- Lil' Domo

From The Beat: A very observant piece you write. What solutions do you have to not return to the life that you have witnessed?

Feelings

Feelings! When you hear this word,
What do you think of?

When I hear this word I tend to think of emotions.

Emotions! When you hear this word,
What do you think of?

I tend to think of thoughts.

Thoughts! When you hear this word,
What do you think of?

I tend to think of choices.

Choices! When you hear this word,
What do you think of?

I think of mistakes.

Mistakes! What you think of when you hear this word.

The past! When I think about the past,

I think about how I'm going to build my future.

- Ashley

From The Beat: And you, you are in the present holding onto your past but planning for the future. Your future is built on each "present moment" when you can look at all the choices you have and choose as wisely as possible.

Make Something Out of My Life

What up Beat, this yo' boy Mookie. Well me, nothing. I just been chillin' in this damn detention center, trying to get up out of here so I can start my life over again, 'cause this shhh ain't cool.

I'm going to get out sooner or later and make it out. My life has just been too much getting locked up, having family affairs all that kinda stuff.

All that is going to change when I get out make something of my life instead of being dead or in prison.

To everybody stay up and stay out of here aight then gone.

-Mookie

From The Beat: Yes! Absolutely, you deserve a real life, a good life, a life that, in your words, you can make something out of. Do you have a plan to make that happen?

My Dream

My dream is to get out of jail, get a job and make some money, cause if I don't get a job I might be back in jail.

But my main dream is to be football player for the Saints or the Dolphins, and go to church I just want to get my life together so I could stop playing dice with my life 'cause I'm moving too fast.

-Hykeem

From The Beat: Holding on to these two dreams could make a big difference in your life! What if you played football at school, and also got a ten hour per week job? It wouldn't be that much money, but it would help you stay out of trouble, and also football would keep you healthy and in shape. You'd be saving those 'fast moves' for the athletic field!

Me

Me? That's a good question! I really don't know who I'm right now 'cause me before I came in here was hella cool. I wasn't really doing no bad shhh! But shhh happen!! I hope I get out soon. I been here at the hall fo' like two months and I don't think I changed but I'm starting to think different about life. Like school! I think I'm ready.

-A Jr.

From The Beat: This is exciting news! It can be a difficult adjustment to get back into school after some time away. Who can you reach out to for help with getting signed up for school? Your R.O.? A relative? Now's a good time to start talking to people and making plans for your next step.

Sleep

When I sleep, I sleep with the devil, but when I wake up I have an angel in me, and with me.

Sometimes I be wishin' and thinkin' about heaven because I'm stuck in hell, and I'm tired of thinkin' about heaven because I'm stuck in hell.

And I'm tired of thinking negative, it's time for a change, I need to really change 'cause I have a whole lot of time standin' on my shoulders....wherever I'm going I'm gonna come out that place with master's in math and my master's in business.

-J-Money

From The Beat: It's the dreams you dream that will keep the angels coming to your sleep. YES, you must get that degree, whatever it takes. Remember to sign up for any and all programs that are available to you, because when you get out, you will have a mission - which is to show the world that with enough determination and heart, a man can overcome anything.

Questions And Answers

1. Something I've always wanted from my parents but never got was care, and have I always got love from my dada and grandparents. But not my mother because she's a crack fiend. But I don't care, it ain't my body she hurtin', it's hers.

But I still love her though. But I do wish she loved me though.

2. In my time capsule I would have some Kool-Aid, some KFC, some dvd players and my dvd's -- so I won't be bored while I am travellin'.

3. My favorite song is by Pretty Ricky, "Love like Honey." It reminds me of Spectacular the singer. I love him!

4. I would describe myself a good nice person who loves attention and respect. And I get along good with others -- sometimes.

-Spectacular

From The Beat: We would bet a whole lot of money that your mom does love you, very much. But her disease, that terrible, life destroying addiction, is making it impossible for her to be the mother she could be if she were clean and sober. After all, how could she not? You're "Spectacular!" Can you find it in you to forgive her?

A Dedication

Hi Beat,

I want to dedicate this poem to all the people that have gone through or is going through something because, "if you have faith, things will change" KEEP YOUR HEAD UP. Use your time wisely so you can grow wiser. It's your life, only you can control what will happen to you.

Where there is life,

There is hope;

Where there is hope,

There is trust;

There is faith,

There is success;

Where there is success

There is God.

(Yes, this is a poem from "A Piece Of Cake")

LOVE ALL YA'LL, EVEN MY ENEMIES...

-La La

From The Beat: Thank you for dedicating this poem to our readers, and for ending on a note of such positivity and love. We are definitely looking forward to seeing more of you in The Beat! Peace.

My Moods

My moods change me in a lot of ways. You see, I have a lot of moods. I can be in a good mood, and I also can be in a bad mood. Usually I'm in a good mood but my moods can change quickly.

If I'm in a bad mood and don't feel like being bothered I advise people to leave me a long and don't bother me.

One day, I was in a bad mood and I had advised everyone to leave me alone because I had just broken up with my boyfriend and I didn't want to be bothered. My cousin, being the irritating person she was, she continued to aggravate me so I went off on her and that really hurt her feelings.

I was her favorite cousin. I know that if I was in a good mood, I wouldn't have gone off on her I would've had a better way of approaching her if I was in a better mood. I would have a more positive attitude had I been in a good mood.

-Sharenisha

From The Beat: It's neat to be able to read your thoughts about being in a bad mood. You recognize your limits in being able to communicate in a positive way. I wonder if you will try to

Gone

Today is October 9, 2007 and I'm tired of this place. This place is not for me. Even tho' I'm coo' with everybody, still I wanna be with my family and my brahs.

I miss home a lot. This is my second time here and my last time here. I know everybody says that but I'm fa' real about mines. I'm going to school, serve these cats in hoop, and get my money. I can't wait to get out and get a fresh start, 'cause everybody makes mistakes. No one is perfect.

I'm grateful for having a loving family 'cause not everyone here has that. My parents are always here on visiting. Other kids never get visitors and I be like "damn, that's scandalous." I'm happy my parents come.

Back to me, I got court this Thursday, which is the 11th and most likely I'm being released.

So when you get this I'm gone!!!

-Scoob

From The Beat: We can tell you our favorite thing to say to our writers, which is that we truthfully hope you we never see you again. Or rather, we hope we never see you in the hall again. But we'd love to bump into you on the outs one day - happy, healthy, and working at something you love!

I Didn't Get It

When I was ten I wanted a bike
Not just a bike most people would like
This bike was the shhh

But my pops wasn't with it
I asked for the bike I didn't get it.

I asked for a 360 but my grades were messed up
They didn't get it for me and I was like what's up?

-Bike Rider

From The Beat: You tell us what happened? WE're all ears and eyes!

Not Born Rich

My moods change when people fake on me. That shhh make me hella mad. When yo' support ain't coo' yo' mind ain't gon' be right. If somethin' really go wrong, yo' killa instinct kick in.

Some people say I'm lucky for going to ROP. Ninja I can't see my mama for six months, and this is my first time. Well I guess it's ma' fault right? Partly 'cause I wasn't born rich so I had to do what I had to do. DA Sheisty, PO and the judge is scandalous too. Guess that's why I got worked.

-Lil' Loe

From The Beat: Saying this is or isn't your "fault," isn't going to help you move on. But it is your responsibility, in the sense that you, and only you, can control your actions. Sure you weren't born rich, but what you did isn't what you had to do, it's what you chose to do. You have lots of choices in this world, so we want to know, what do you choose for your future? Do you think you will "have" to do dirt for money, respect fun? We hope not.

That American Pipe Dream

Hey, what up Beat, yeah, it's me, Lil' Kari.

I'm in here for some stuff I didn't even do. What my so-called friend got me into, but whatever he got me into, I got to get myself out to the world and accomplish something in life besides selling drugs, smoking weed, popping pills, chasing the American pipe dream of getting rich.

It's obvious it ain't working, so I'm gon' go to school and accomplish a high school diploma and be a college grad. Peace out.

-Lil' Kari

From The Beat: Sounds like you are already getting rich - rich in knowledge, rich in self-confidence, rich in ambition. And once you have that, making money won't be nearly as hard as you think!

Mean Ol' User Of A Friend

I have a best friend named James. We knew each other for about five years. So anyway, we hung out everyday. He basically lived with me. He'd stay over my house for a week and I'd do the same with him, back and forth.

Anyways, we'd always do a lot of robberies, keeping it real, I'm not going to lie about it. He'd make me do everything and he'd want a cut or if I did it by myself, he'd still want a cut. But anyways, he'd always follow me if I had some money or weed or cigarettes. He'd want me to drive my car, but I'd say no and he'd get mad if I didn't let him drive my car.

I never got that my mom was telling me that he was just using me; I never saw that in him. But I realized that when I came to jail and he was wearing my clothes, tryin' to steal my girl. I can't go with that. I have to go now. Thank you.

-Derik

From The Beat: It sounds like you came to the right conclusion about this "friend".

I Don't Care if you were a Prostitute

I don't care if you were a prostitute
And you hated every man you ever knew
That was way before me and you girl,
See you ain't never got to worry about me

I'll always keep it real

Just stay true to me and never lie to me

No matter, whatever and ever

See you 'ain't never got to worry about me

I'll always keep it real

Just speaks what's on your mind

And say how you feel

Just stay true to me and never lie to me.

-Lil' Walt

From The Beat: The relationship you describe here is the true kind, the one based on honesty and unconditional love, where you accept the person no matter what they've been through, no matter what they've done. Have you ever experienced this kind of love yourself? What about the other kind?

Me

I am a person who don't take no shhh from nobody. No staff, nobody. But to get home, I gotta play the game to make it back, I'm never coming back.

And it's hard for me 'cause moms be stressing, I'm in here depressed, mad sad when I get out its gon' be a pleasure.

Everything was cool until now, I was a big hustla messin' with females. I was getting money, coming up big, then Taz and the boys kept messing wit' me 'cause of how deep I was. Then I was escorted here to Juvenile Hall, a place I'm never coming back to, ever!

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: Lockdown creates one kind of stress, but freedom creates another. If you do decide to break away from the criminal ways you had before, what kinds of struggles do you think you'll face? Can you see yourself giving up the squad, the hustle, all those things you used to be involved with? We hope you do, because we don't want to see you back here, ever, either!

Runnin'

Runnin' on the streets livin' the fast life
In the dark, pistols be flashlight.

Runnin' from 5-0 high speedin'

Runnin' through red lights

Lucky I get away

I ain't tryin' to catch another case.

So I'm movin' in fast pace

It's always somebody speakin' on me so I
Leave 'em wit' a nasty taste in they mouth.

I don't have to present to show what I'm 'bout.

I ain't never been new to game.

But since we down my name still remain

But since it's heard so much when my name

Brought up them haters fill a slight pain.

But that's a motivation.

It inspires me to keep money makin'

I'm gonna shine it's my time

But you gotta be coo' 'cause them suckas

Droppin' dimes

But that's okay

Ninja's just mad 'cause they can't fit my J's

-Domo

From The Beat: You have talent, as this and so many of your other flows proves.... So why waste your time and skill trying to rap about how tough you are? Especially when this particular game is one that has already taken so much from you, almost your life! Just imagine how much you could accomplish if you put your incredible talents to thoughts about your future, instead of your peers?

I Have A Dream

Before, I gotta say, my mind was all messed up. All I used to worry about is getting' high and hittin' licks and tryin' to get ova. But as time grew on me I grew wiser. I got my mind set on one thing. Rapping. I mean I do know that I gotta have something to fall back on, you know, just in case.

But I'm not thinking about that 'cause as far as I'm concerned it's gonna work. But you know I'm smarter and I got my mind on more than just smoking weed and coming to jail. I bet it sounds kinda weird 'cause I'm in jail now but I'm utilizing my time.

-Da Boi

From The Beat: We fully support your dream of being a rapper, but only if you promise to go to school too. And by that, we mean college. Because the more knowledge you have, the greater of an artist you will be. Think about it. Some artists have street knowledge, some have education, but how many have both? Just imagine how powerful that would be!

See Me

See where I come from, it the heart of life.
See the block I come from is nothing but family.
See the hood I grow up in is the mean street.
See the house I stay in is nothing now.
See the tattoo on my body just cover war scars.
See the clothes on my back is drug money.
See the car I'm driving is a dream.
See the rims on this car are a future.
See me because I can't see none of these things.

-Shadow

From The Beat: Interesting twist at the end. Are these all the things that somebody sees when they look at you? What do you see? What would you like to see change? What do you see in the future (besides those rims...)

I Wanna Make Her Mine

She is divine
I wanna make her body and mine entwine
I don't even know her name
But why bother it's always the same
She just gonna play that game
I don't want to love
Because so many watch me from above
But I do
But who
Do you know
I'm not just spittin' a flow
It comes from the heart
Don't even let me start
How do I tell her
Do I just tell her
Or do I just read this poem
If I do I become a lonely phantom
I'm talking about sixth floor apt twenty-five
And I need my fix
I'm not talking about drugs
I'm talking about her hugs
I don't have a chance
So please pierce my heart with a lance
If you don't
I just won't...

-Kyle

From The Beat: Kyle, it's great to see you writing poems about heart, instead of just about desperation. It's good to love, even when that love isn't returned, because a broken heart is still a beating heart... and a beating heart is a living heart. We hope you find your true love, and in the meantime, never stop searching for her...

Me and My Family

All of the names are: Derik, that's me. My brother, Donovan. My mom, Patricia. My little brother, Amari. My grandpa, Hank. My girlfriend, Kedonna, and that's my family.

But anyways, my life has changed because I've done a lot of things in my life that I regret now, that I wish I never did. But I can't take it back now. My mom was telling me not to do it, but I was still doing it anyways, just not caring or thinking about myself or my family or what I was doing.

Now that I'm in jail, I really have been thinking. I can't do anything because I just had to be greedy when I didn't have to, when my mom was providing everything for me. But I felt like I needed more and more. But now I'm in a juvenile center.

I've changed and now I'm trying to get out of here and get my life together and be with my family because they really do need me. If I think about it or not, my girlfriend is having my baby, so I have something to look forward to now so I have to go back to school and get a job to provide for my baby and I'm not going to be like one of those dads not taking care of their kids. I had sex with her so I got to take care of my responsibility. My little brother needs me too. He really needs me in the long run and I'm trying to get back with my brother (Donovan) that has been locked up or in some type of institution or something. I want him to get it together and that's my story and thank you. Dedicated to my family.

-Derik

From The Beat: We know that you have been doing a lot of soul-searching during your time in juvenile hall. You are fortunate to have a family that can provide you with support. Hopefully, they will help you as you take on the responsibilities of parenthood. You and your brother used to get into trouble together, but maybe now you can respect your mom and help yourselves by going legit and getting some job training. It must be very hard for her to see both of her sons locked up right now.

The Hate Game?

I often find me asking myself this question. I then see it plan and clear, people hate for different reasons. That's why I keep my canon. People always hatin so that's why I was on the watch for haters that was tryna stop my shine I had that hammerless weapon while I was on my grind, 'cause if they would have tried my I would blow there mind, but instead 5.0 was on my line, so I was tryna lay low.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: You must be living a life on the edge if you seriously need to carry a gun to keep haters away. Most of us simply walk away. In truth, now don't get mad, but we are so glad you are locked up, why do we need another strapped hater on the streets, doing nothing productive! Get it right and rejoin the rest of us living legitly, otherwise the system will have a place for you!

I Wonder Why?

You ain't heard I'm crazy, hyperactive, skitz and shhhh?
Or is it you don't wanna hear this kid?
But the proof is in the puddin,
"He ain't never really been like them other kids".
I wonder why I'm numb sometimes?
Is the reason I stay high because I seen too many people die?
I wonder this I wonder that I wonder why?

-Sticky

From The Beat: Your poem touches on a lot of the issues facing kids in the system: witnessing violence from a young age, feeling numb as a result, and not being able to get the right health care resources. It's enough to make anyone feel crazy (and unheard). Don't stop wondering about the world and your place in it. Keep asking "why?" Even when we get handed a diagnosis or a label, each of us is still a complex human being who deserves respect and honest answers.

Stress

What it do Beat? I have been in the Hall for three weeks now. I still have not got out of this piece of shhh Juvenile Hall. Still waitin' for that group home to come and get me out of jail.

I wish I just would have stayed at my group home in Eagle Rock I had 5 months left in the home with my ninja & my whole family. I just found out my dad is bleeding on his insides.

He may not able to make it but my g-mama told me that he got out today but he has not been feeling well at all since he been out. I just hope I get out, and get my group home done, and go home to help my dad.

- Jazzie

From The Beat: Jazzie, we are so sorry to hear about your father. Will he be able to visit you soon, or does he have to stay in bed to get healthy? The fact that he got to go home is a good sign, but our hearts go out to you and your whole family in this challenging time.

My Ex

I have a mean friend, her name is Tanisha. I'm still friends with her because she's my ex-girlfriend and that's how she is. She's not really mean, people make her that way. I was in love her for her attitude toward others. She don't play.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Explain how people made your ex mean? What happened between the two of you?

One Minute I Will Be Cool...

My mood changes me when I get mad, sad and confused.

Sometimes when I get too mad I don't have any feelings and I intend on doing whatever I feel like doing. It is a difference when I am sad and mad, because when I get sad, I feel like the whole world has no place for me, and that I don't belong here.

People say my mood swinging do be crazy, because one minute I will be cool the next minute I will be too happy. I don't know what it can be.

-James

From The Beat: Believe it or not, there isn't a single human being who hasn't felt like you do when you're sad... You put it perfectly: "I feel like the whole world has no place for me" The worst part is the loneliness, right? But we hope you know, that everyone has this feeling sometimes, you're not alone. Do you have loved ones to turn to when those blues take you by the throat? We hope so. Remember: You are not alone.

I Really Want My Life Back

This Friday I go to court and I hope that I get a release. This isn't for me. I'm better than people see me as.

I want to go home to my family, friends and girlfriend.

I can't do what I want to do in juvenile hall but on the outs I can see my family, friends, girlfriend, and the stars. Locked up in that little cell isn't getting me nowhere.

When I get out, I'm gonna make things better: go to school, stop smoking, and come home on time so I won't come back and throw my life away by violating my probation. I want to be different, make a change, so people can know the real me.

-Lewis

From The Beat: You list some good, solid, specific goals, and they are absolutely the key to getting through probation. The PO might not watch you too closely at first, which makes it tempting to break curfew. The high rate of incarceration for young people who violate probation speaks for itself. The rules are tough, but the rules are the rules. If you get through it, you will be able to breathe free again.

I'm Already There

Goodbye to you Beat Within

We had good times talking about little stuff
It's this cell which don't feel so well

That I had enough

Finally I can break these cuffs

And walk out free

You can't believe so many things are waiting for me

Thanks though Beat you really helped me,

When I was in so much heat

You stayed all ears and eyes.

I like that one of these days I'll write back

Stay on the top

Don't turn back and drop

Take care 'cause my freedom

I'll take it I'm already there!

- P

From The Beat: Thanks P! We hope to hear from you again, to put your words in The Beat Without, writing to show the rest of the young people that there is hope on the other side of that locked door. In the meantime hold onto that freedom like it was more precious than life, because it is...

Why I'm In Here

I'm in here because of a stupid reason. I'm in here because my probation officer wants to violate me for no reason. She violated me for an old drug test that she said she was going to give me a warning on. She also violated me for saving my homey's life. I saved his life by hopping in a fight when he got stabbed three times. I took him to the hospital holding his stab wound. The doctor said he was in critical condition.

For a couple days I stressed, wondering if he was going to be ok, and at the end, he turned out fine. I'm happy that he survived, but I'm mad I got violated for that. That's the story.

-Awood

From The Beat: That's a tough situation. You should feel good about saving your friend's life and getting him to the hospital, but how did it help to jump into the fight? What happened before the fight? Who was the fight with?

Still In Jail

My day went real good but the thing is, I been in jail for two months and jail is not cool at all-- four walls and a window. Oh My God! I miss the outs so much I miss my mom, my baby sister, my dad, my family, my girlfriends (LOL). Even if I got too many, it's all good.

I hate it here for real, I know it's hard for me but I can do it. I will go to a group home some time this week or next week. I'm not going to run. I'm going to do it for my sister and my life.

All I need to do is 6 to 9. I'll do it and get out in six, tops, for real. I'll get a job or some kind of grind-- get money and get on 24-inch rims, ya feel me?

Life is damn hard out here for a lil ninja bra man. It's hard to eat 'cause you gotta look out for 5-0 all damn day. And damn, my bra Ant just died shhh, it's hard for me because that was my ninja. When I get out, all I'm going to do is get a girl, get money, and grind on the side. P.S this is my life.

-Domwezey

From The Beat: It's good to know that in these difficult times, you think of your family and how much their love means to you. That's a good reason to do the right thing. Take good care. Be a good role model for your little sister! She'll need you to be there for her when she's going through rough times.

A Verse Of Truth

This The Beat Within and I'm tryna get out.

It's my third time in and this what it about.

I had an AWOL warrant and an attempted burglary case.
Was gonna turn myself in Sunday, but Wednesday was the chase.

They came to the house, so out the back I ran.

Hopped the fence and left as fast as I can

Then I thought, "what the f--- I run for? An evading arrest case? Now I'm done for."

So I layed down on the ground, assumed the position

Got searched, got cuffed, placed in submission

On our way to the station we passed my lady's house.

Wanted to scream out the window but I could only look out.

The station was nothin', I was waitin' for the hall.

A brand-new facility, don't wanna be there at all.

And now I'm there writin' for The Beat Within

So you also know about my third time in.

-Spidey

From The Beat: Great poem. We could picture what was happening every step of the way, and how awful it must have felt. You had some good instincts kick in while you were running. As hard as it is, sometimes the best thing a person can do is stop running and surrender, especially with a warrant.

Something Right

People want to know, how my mood changes me

From good to bad or bad to ugly.

Everything is a struggle, sometime you have to push

Can't always debate, sometime you have to shush...

Follow the light, and it will lead you the way

But how can you see, when the light for away

Going to school is my top motivation

Listen to my heart, and don't worry about people hatin'

It hard in society, then in the jungle

Some animals is anxious, and some animals is humble

Some settle from dead prey, and some feed off life

The only thing I'm settling for, is for something right.

-Camerin

From The Beat: You're right not settle, you have that light inside you, too bright for dark deeds. What exactly is that "Something Right" you are looking for? Once you know exactly what you want, it will be easier to go for it.

Wanting Trust And Respect

Something I always wanted from but never got was trust and to be looked at as a man.

The reason why I have always wanted these things is because I never got a chance to prove to my parents that I deserved these things. I always was so caught up in the street life that I was never at home.

When I was at home I was always doing something I had no business doing like stealing money or beating up my little brothers-- whatever else I could get into that I wasn't supposed to be doing.

These are reasons why I couldn't earn my mother's trust but I always wanted it, and it killed me that I wasn't worthy enough for her trust but we live and we learn. So eventually I pushed myself to leave home because I was always messing up. From then on, I considered myself a man, but my parents didn't. I didn't accomplish that mission because I ended up here, and I still don't have their trust nor do they see me as a man.

-William

From The Beat: Sometimes, when we are caught up in pleasing our parents, we create this standard that seems impossible to live up to... How about this, take sometime to listen to your parents wishes and meet them half way? Be someone you are proud of AND someone who your parents can be proud of too.

This Is Just Me Dude

Man I know when I'm alone I feel strong. I feel like there's nothing out here that can stop me more pop me.

When I'm wit' people it seems like I get from mean... too joyful and talking a lot to my associates about any & everything. When I'm stressed out, or locked up. I get frustrated, I get real ugly & mean toward people I don't care about. I seem to appreciate my family I respect their opinion when I get with them.

But when I'm locked up I don't care about no one. I sometimes know people, so I click up with them, but I still show no sympathy.

I only have associates, but my brother and my mother is my friend. My father is the Lord God, and my dad's with them in heaven.

Man, I try to be cool, but this is just me dude.

-Lil Relly Bo

From The Beat: If you had to choose, would you describe yourself as more of an introvert or more of an extrovert? (An introvert tends to need alone time to re-charge and stay balanced, while an extrovert needs that feeling of having a lot of people to talk with and socialize).

Gang Banging

To me gang banging all started in Redwood City. I used to look at my older brother and thought I want to be like him. I started kickin' it with the homies, posting, smoking weed also drinking forties. We started riots at the school with the rival gang members, got locked up, got out, still kicking it 'till these days. I'm out alratos.

-Lil' Cholo

From The Beat: If this is how you tick, then prepare for a long ride in corrections.

Wonder Why, Part 2

You pro'ly wonder why I write, huh?!

You wonder why I cut my pancakes wit a spoon, not a knife, huh?

And pro'ly why I act dumb. You wonder how I know hella big words, yet I act dumb.

Me, I wonder how I claim to cherish life but I stopped one.

Shh! Keep quiet

You wonder how I go bad on yo' sisters when I got some.

You probably wonder why I trip, huh?

You wonder what make me mad enough to call a grown woman a b----, huh?

I wonder how come I don't give a ...?

But when I'm cool, I tell my potnas " nah...don't pull out the pistols, brah".

I wonder why I come to jail when I know damn well, I can avoid these cement cells.

Sometimes I wonder what I'm living fo'!!

I think bout life 24/7. Sometimes wanna end it like a video.

Then think of little nephew an my sister tho' they are going to be as mad as I-don't-know-what, so forget it, yo'.

I wonder why. I wonder why I'm sad, when I know damn well It's karma from stressing out the fam'.

-Sticky

From The Beat: What works for you when you are trying to sort through this confusing mix of anger, sadness, and guilt? Writing? Talking with someone you trust? Listening to music? Feeling regret for the crimes you committed, or for letting your family down, is totally legit, but you shouldn't beat yourself up for some of the other stuff you are dealing with right now. We wish we could talk with you some more during workshops. You deserve support. Don't give up on yourself.

Tired

As I sit in this place
I think where did I go wrong
I been here too many times and way too damn long
I get out
come back
get out again
and...
this shhh is so crazy, will it ever end.

-Lil' Tb

From The Beat: It ends when you are ready to make a change for the better!

Angry

I don't think that I can support the risks of my losing my calmness. I don't think it's my fault, in fact I don't think it's anyone's fault, because getting angry is natural.

-Merdell

From The Beat: It's how you control your anger. How do you control that temper of yours?

This Is Who I'm

I'm lil Dirt
y'all know that name
if you don't, you gon' hear about me from somebody my name is like a hot line it just keep on ringing.
I always stay solid no matter what state of mind I'm in.
I don't eat cheese
mommy told me better than that.
If I ever see a rodent I might just stomp on it.
You might just call me a pit 'cause all I do is hit.

-Lil' Dirt

From The Beat: We so appreciate you writing from the heart. As you know we can't put everything you write in The Beat because it's hard, and we have to be careful what we put in our pages as guest of the system, so keep pushing the pencil and eventually your work will be featured!

Mood Swings

What it is Beat? I am really moody. Sometimes I'm angry all the time especially when I'm locked up, but when I realize it's my fault I feel a little better. I think I'm bipolar but the doctor says I'm not. I'm mad, sad and happy all in one time. I mean I can smash and then laugh about it. Everybody I kick it with says I'm crazy. It's cool though, today I'm in a good mood. Later Beat.

-Derrick

From The Beat: If you think something is wrong with you and the one doctor says no, maybe you should get a second opinion and explain why you feel this way?

Family Mood

For the most part, my mood involves mostly the relationship with my mother/family. Her and I argue a lot. I would blow, every time she repeatedly reminds me of something or to just nag for relentless hours. Other than that, not many people like to annoy me. And even though I have these verbal fights with my mother/family, I still love her. And it doesn't take me too long to get over it.

-Guy

From The Beat: Can you tell your mom how she annoys you? Maybe there's a middle ground for the two of you? Do you understand why she repeats herself? Isn't it out of love?

Home Or Here?

Tomorrow I go to court to see if I go home. I really want to go home. I'm tired of being locked behind these doors, being told when I can eat, or when I can come out. While I'm in here I been thinking about ways to stay out, and I think I got my mind made up how to stop coming, so if the judge lets me go home I'm going to try my hardest not to come back.

-Deshon

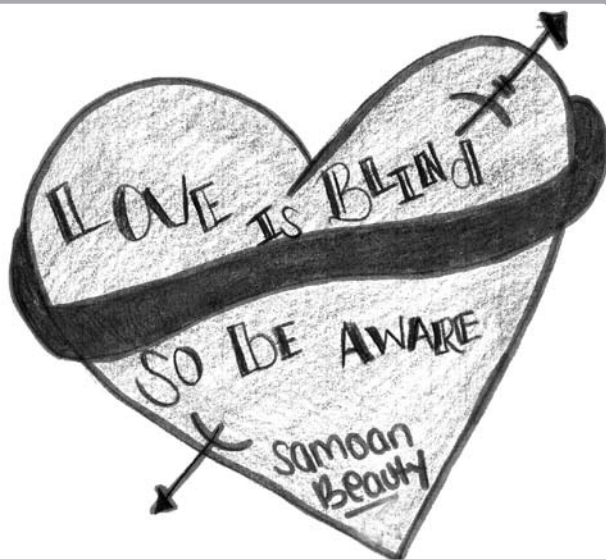
From The Beat: Tell us your plan on staying out? Inspire and lace us readers!

Who I Am

I am Merdell and I am being locked up for Battery and Attempted Robbery. There is something that I am most definitely going to explain to everyone who's concerned about my incident(case). I am being charged with being with a group of guys who started a robbery.

-Merdell

From The Beat: That's the problem, you were with a group who was doing wrong! If they're your friends, then you need to surround yourself with better homies than ones who will lead you to jail!



I Am Respectful, Always!

If I were to give a speech about who I am I would say I am a respectful person in jail and on the outs. I am the same on both sides on the outs and in here, though I made a bad decision.

I am not the kind of person that smokes, drinks or does any kind of drugs. I don't do drugs they're not in part of my life.

I am the kind of person that stays with his family most times, and goes to school and tries to do my best.

I could give you an example... I never got suspended from school on the outs and even in here, Juvenile Hall, I am the kid the tries to help his family when they need help.

I also don't disrespect anyone, not even a person in jail.

I'm gonna change the wrong decisions I made and not come back up to this stupid ugly place.

-Marco

From The Beat: You have our support and our respect! What must you do so you don't make the same mistake twice?

Menace Talks About His Life

TBW: There are now three areas in San Francisco where gang members can't go together, because the areas are all embargoed now. Some people think that's fair and others think it designates certain people as gang members, whether they are or not, and that the new law is discriminatory against certain areas, certain groups of people. What do you think, Menace?

M: Yeah, it's not fair. I'm on that list now.

TBW: You are? How do you know that?

M: I seen the list. Jack (Jacqua, of Omega Boys Club) showed it to me. I'm there.

TBW: How do you feel about being on that list?

M: It's messed up, because I can't associate with none of my friends, you feel me? Or be able to chill in the neighborhood.

TBW: So you live in the neighborhood that has just been embargoed?

M: No, but I chill there. I live far away. I'm there whenever I'm not on the run from my group home.

TBW: When you're on the run, you can't go there?

M: No, the police know me.

TBW: So, when you get off the Ranch, where are you going to chill?

M: Where my rivals are at. He ha. Just kiddin'.

TBW: But the area where your rivals live isn't under the same injunction as your area is?

M: No.

TBW: Why not?

M: I think it's because a (certain police officer) used to be a rival and he became a cop and he tried to push this little movement to get rid of me and my friends.

TBW: So he's got that kind of power?

M: He doesn't have that much power, but he can come up with evidence to prove to the DA that they should do the indictment in the Mission.

TBW: And not include the area where your rivals live?

M: Yeah.

TBW: Do you think that's fair?

M: Hell, no.

TBW: So what does this mean to your future, when you get out?

M: I gotta lay low, chillin' at the house with my cousins and stuff. But my friends be comin' through when it gets hot on the block.

TBW: So when there's trouble on your block, the area that's now under the injunction, your friends come out to where you live?

M: Yeah.

TBW: Sometimes you write for The Beat that you wonder if your gangbanging would interfere with a girl liking you. Do you mean that your bangin' scares girls? That it's too heavy for them? That they may be afraid to love you because they're afraid if they hang with you, that they'll get sucked into your life?

M: Yeah, (it sometimes interferes with girls).

TBW: What does it mean to you, with girls, that you bang?

M: I gotta always be watchin' my back. If I'm talkin' to a girl

and I let her get in my head, I might slip. Somebody might put a bullet my head. A lot of girls like me 'cause I bang, and a lot of girls like me 'cause they like me. But I can't be with her on the block because she gonna be slowin' me down on my hustle. Like maybe she wants me to go to a party with her, but I gotta work. Girls ain't feelin' that.

TBW: Has this already happened to you, with girls? That they slowed you down?

M: Yeah, so I just stopped messin' with this one girl. Why don't you ask me if I've ever been in a deep relationship?

TBW: Good idea. Have you ever been in a deep relationship with a lady?

M: No.

TBW: Why not? It sounds like you'd like to be in one.

M: I just never got into that kind of relationship. You know, I told you, what I do in the streets is dangerous. I don't know if I'm gonna live.

TBW: But why does that stop you from being in a serious relationship?

M: Because I've always been like that. I don't think you can trust girls. They always be playin' behind your back. But I want a kid.

TBW: A kid and a wife?

M: I don't want no wife, I just want a kid.

TBW: Why don't you want a wife?

M: You don't necessarily have to be married just to show someone you love 'em. You don't have to have a big ass ceremony to let people know you're together.

TBW: If your lady and you had a kid together, would you live with them?

M: The only reason I want a kid is because I know livin' this life of gangbanging, I could lose my life at any time. If I was to die and leave this earth, I would feel better if I left someone on this earth to continue my bloodline.

TBW: So you'd like to have a child?

M: If I had a child, I wouldn't be trippin' about not havin' a kid, 'cause I'd have one.

TBW: Would you still be gangbanging if you had a kid?

M: Yeah.

TBW: Would you want your kid to gangbang when he grew up?

M: No. My kid's gonna be a square, go to school and become a professor or something.

TBW: How are you going to teach him to be a square, to go to school, to study, if you aren't a square? If you gangbang?

M: I'm gonna tell him what to do. I'm not gonna let him see what I do in the streets. I wanna have a whole bunch of kids. I hope they succeed in life. I just want to give my kids what I didn't have in life. I don't want them to live in the ghetto, I want them to live in the suburbs.

TBW: Do you want girls or boys?

M: Boys, but a girl would be nice. It doesn't matter.

-Menace

From The Beat: It's so wonderful that little by little you reveal to readers who you are, what you care about. It's not that you'd necessarily have to make a choice between your own family and your homies, but because you don't want to give up your street life, you have to seriously consider whether you want to endanger your kids and/or make them grow up without you. But why are you so willing to risk your own young life? Why isn't it more precious to you? Who are you without your homies? Without any prospective family? Who are you on your own?

How Your Moods Change You...

By makin' you angry or sad. Your friends can notice your moods by the expressions on your face.

-Tito

From The Beat: This is a good beginning, Tito, but it makes us want more. What makes you angry? What makes you sad? What makes you happy? What makes you laugh? What makes you cry? You can write much more than you did.

Mean People

I think when someone was raised up the wrong way or had a bad experience in some way, that can cause them to be mean. Also, when you don't pay enough attention to some, that can make them mean. And when you're a disturbed person, you could turn out mean.

-Tay B

From The Beat: When are you mean? Don't you think that all of us can be mean some of the time?

Couldn't Nobody Abuse Me This Time

Back in Juvy again. Damn. I promised maself that I wasn't gonna come back. I had too much shhh going on for me. I just put myself back-track after puttin' up wit' ma family bullshhh and them drivin' me into a group home.

I sat up in the group home for eight months . First two months, I took advantage and acted out, smoked, drank, and came home late. I did whatever I wanted to do because this time, couldn't nobody abuse me.

After acting up and wildin' out, I finally took a look at ma situation and realized I kinda played myself. I let mah grades slip. I let weak females get the best of me and had they drama follow me, and the thought of not being with my family hurted.

-Cookie

From The Beat: We hate to read a piece that begins with the bards "back in juvy." But even though you sabotaged yourself again, you have survived abuse at the hands of others. Part of growing up is making mistakes and learning from them. Another part is learning to be your own best friend.

Still Waiting

Today I was mad because I was supposed to go to court but they never came and got me. I been in here five days. I still ain't went to court, but I am supposed to be going tomorrow. Man, I miss my boyfriend and my mother hecka much. I can't wait to get out of this stupid place.

- Ki Wifey

From The Beat: It is easier said than done to be patient when you don't know what fate awaits you. We hope that when you get out, you stay out for good, so you won't have to be waiting around for others to see your live move forward.

My Speech About Who I am

I sometimes don't know who I am. I do know I'm a boy that wanna go home, scared, and regrets all the things I have done in the past. I love to dance. I love my family and I hate that I hang out with the wrong people. My mama tells me I'm a prince and my skin kisses the sun. Her gaze so beautiful.

So that who I am.

-Traevontae'

From The Beat: Even though you say you don't always know who you are, you've done a good job of describing yourself. Be the prince your mama knows you can be!

Mary Jane

I caress you, you fall apart and I smell the smell I miss,
with your purple dress

I can't wait for you to touch my big brown swish

I lick you up until you are ready for the fire

I been fiending for you and it's time for my desire.

You're my one true love and for you I'll blow

And for me you promise to get me down and low

I inhale your love and hit you one stroke at a time

You're making me light-headed with shhh I can't define.

My friends smell you and want to hit but I quickly deny

'Cause I pay for you, Mary Jane and you're all mine

I'm getting high from the fumes you're sending

And upset that now you're coming to an ending

I put you out but I will see you later on today

And pay more for you, because I'm your biggest fan

I love you, Marijuana.

-Giggles

From The Beat: How much did this love affair contribute to where you are right now? We wish you'd put as much effort into finishing school and preparing yourself for a real life as you do into this tight love poem to mj...

Moods

The changing moods thing, that's not cool. Changing moods make you go crazy. Changing moods make you lose weight. "The hall makes you change moods makes you wanna gaze shoe, do the do." Going crazy, doing the do

-Tashelle

From The Beat: Do you have any strategies for putting yourself in a mood that you like? If not, others will always be able to manipulate your moods, and therefore manipulate your mind.

Thinking Of You

The day is done and darkness

falls from the wings of night

As a feather wafts downwards

from an eagle in it's flight

I see the lights of the city

gleam through the fog and mist

and a feeling of sadness comes over me

that my heart cannot resist

a feeling of sadness and longing

that along side comes pain,

and resembles sorrow, just as the mist resembles rain

however, when you come around

and beside me you lay,

your presence soothes this restless feeling

and banishes the thoughts of day.

I miss you, Babe, and soon all of our hopeless feelings will disappear when I am freed from this hell.

-eMo

From The Beat: It's comforting to know you have someone on the outside whose mere presence in your life soothes you and that you continue to instill hope in each other despite the circumstances right now. But not all your negative feelings come from "this hell." Some you carry with you, and those are the ones you have to face head on because they will be with you even when the two of you get back together.

My Birthday

My birthday is very important to me this year because I'll be 18, which makes me legal. Now I can date my 23-year-old boyfriend and the law can't stop me!

-La'Deezy

From The Beat: Does becoming "legal" mean anything more to you than being with your boyfriend? How will you have changed?

If I Could...

Thoughts of the past

linger in my mind

Regrets and wishes to change

the things I've left behind

If I had done things differently

and thought about my ways

nothing would be as it is now,

I would have lived better days

As my days would be different,

changed also, I would be

But what I have been through

has made me me.

So if I had a chance

to do it all differently

I wouldn't change a single day

or anything about me.

-eMo

From The Beat: Well, if you'd change nothing about your past, what do you want to change about your future?

Eternal Love

Idolizing you every day

Looking out the window, watching the Bay
Over and over, imaging your face, asking what to do
Visualizing you next to me, embracing you
Emptying my thoughts, to put you in them

You are so intelligent, and I believe everything you've
ever said

Opening my heart to you
Understand that I am deeply in love with you

A beautiful female you are
Need to see my beautiful star
Depressed because you are so far
Remember seeing you, and now we are apart
Emotion of love is what I feel for you babe
And no one will ever take it away

No one can ever take your place

I love you, and I feel no disgrace

Another day, another hour
Loving you as much as I can, having emotional power
Wishing I can hold you
Asking myself what to do
Yes, I love you and I am not ashamed of it
Saying it over and over, being candid

When can I be with you
I wish I knew
Listening to my heart down what it says
Loving you eternally, from beginning to end!

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: We admire the style in which you wrote this passionate love poem. But tell us, what is so special about Andrea? Why is she the one? And why did you put something above your love for her that allowed the system to take you from her?

Like Almost Every Five Minutes

My moods change me because my moods change like almost every five minutes. I be like, "Damn!" because I hate that when it happens it affects how I talk to somebody else and how I treat them and treat their feelings. But it all depends on my mood at that moment to see if I care about their feelings, and that's that.

-Cindy

From The Beat: It's best if you can find a way to get control of your moods so you're not up and down like a yo-yo. If you hate it when you go negative on somebody because of a mood change, try to think of things you love either from the past or what you're looking forward to in the future. It's not fair to take your moods out on others who've done nothing to you.

How Do Your Moods Change You

I have a lot of move swings. One minute and hot and not the other. That is because I am in here. so doing time gets to my brain. But I'm 'bout to get out... again.

-Er-Daddy-O

From The Beat: The fact that you're getting out "again" tells us that your strategy is not working very well. What will it take for you to stop doing the things that you should know by now lead right back to lock-up? (By the way, please don't write about all three topics. Choose one topic and write much more about it. The most you gave us on any topic was four sentences, and you can't really say much of anything in four sentences. Choose the one topic you care most for, and write a whole lot more than one or two sentences about it.)

My Attitude

-Cinnamon

From The Beat: If you want to be published in The Beat, you'll have to turn your attention away from the girls you describe so negatively here, and focus on yourself. We're interested in your story and where it goes from here, not your threats to others you don't think are up to your standards... You have real skills as a writer, why not use them to spread some light...

Wondering About My Future

I was wondering... Is it possible for a person to lose feelings for you just because you're not around? Well, that's what I've been asking my ex-girl. It's been 100 days since July 4th since I been locked up. If I go back out and see her unexpectedly, will both our feeling come back?

I really, really love this girl. When I get out, I'm going to surprise her and show up in front of her house. I don't even know what's going to happen with my case yet... It's still pre-trial. This is the first time I've really wanted something and I couldn't get it. For all you guys that have the same situation, I know how you guys be feeling, I know I'm being very patient right now.

-Chinese Guy

From The Beat: Since you write about the same loss week after week, we know how much you're feeling the pain of separation — and we hope you'll remember this pain when you get out from under this situation so you won't have to repeat it. We don't know what the future holds, even for ourselves, so we can't speculate about your future relationship with her. But have you ever heard the phrase, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder"? We hope that's true in her case, 'cause it's obviously true in yours.

How My Mood Change Me And Attitude

Well, when I'm in a good mood I'm very nice, calm, giving and just very jolly. When I'm in a bad mood I argue and yell, get very disrespectful. When I'm scared like now, I depend on God 100% and I tend to cry a lot, sad all the time, feel lonely and lost, don't talk much, and that how I feel now.

I so, so, so, so scared. I wanna go home, back to my family. I wish I would have listen when people told me I was hanging with the wrong crowd. I wish I would had listen to my mama when she told me about the sheep in wolf clothing. I'm just so stubborn and I pray a lot.

-Traevontae'

From The Beat: Why are you so scared, T? Is it because of what you're facing in court or what you're facing in the hall? What have you learned from this sad experience? Now that you see where hanging with the wrong crowd can lead you, what are the changes you plan to make in your life when you get.

Talking About Someone Else

Yeah man, what's up wit' da Beat? Me, same dookie just a different day.

Today I saw the topic giving a speech about who you are, and I said to myself, this is an opportunity to say how I feel. But then I changed my mind because a lot of these other juveniles are always talking about someone else and not working on their selves. For instance "Fat Mouse" talking about the next fat brother in here when he almost his same size... I don't let it bother me though even though they try an' pull me in to dat negativity. I just ignore it and do my own thing.

All right Beat, I'm out fa see you next week "B".

-Da Futon Boi

From The Beat: We don't get you, DFB. You complain about those who are "always talking about someone else," and then you proceed to do exactly the same thing! How 'bout writing about yourself. Let us hear that speech about who you are.

Moods

Yeah man, what's up with The Beat? I'm here to talk about my mood. Sometimes I be in a messed up mood, so sometimes I seem to take it out on the people that's around me by doing things like take flight or call them names. But sometime I be in a mood lovely where nothing can get to me, so I stay calm and be a gentleman to ladies and kind to all people. But I try to be in that cool mood even when I'm under pressure that negativity. For instance, like lock up. I see some people let these walls put them in a mood that's like screw the world, but for me, I think like they meaning the system can't hold me forever. I'm go home one day so my mood always cool, calm and good.

-Lazy Boy

From The Beat: We respect you for wanting to keep your mood cool, and for recognizing that it's good practice for when you get out of here. How much do you think your mood is affected by how much sleep you get? We've read that when you don't get enough sleep, that "flight or fight" instinct kicks in big time.

Looking Towards Next Summer

I supposed to be going to court October 11, 2007 and go to a group home called The Walden House on Haight for three months. I going to do the program and don't end up here again. When my birthday come January 25, 2008, I will be almost 15. I will ask my case manager Marc Babus to try to find me a job for the summer.

-Ali

From The Beat: It seems like you've got a good attitude for the future. Walden House can be a good program if you go with the right mindset. We also like your idea of asking for help to find a summer job so that you keep yourself occupied and earn money at the same time. Keep moving along this path and things will get better.

The Homies

The homies is always being put down like they don't do nothing but get people in trouble and have the young homies do bad things. But that ain't true. One of my homies named Peanut never tell me to do nothing wrong and always keep me out of trouble on the unda. But yeah, gotta give it up for the homies, ya dig.

-Er-Daddy-O

From The Beat: We think you're right. It's very easy to dismiss all the homies (or all the gang bangers) with a single description, even though they (you, we) are all complete human beings with the full range of emotions, desires, good and bad. Thank you for reminding us.

A New Man

Before I got locked up, I was sort of a bad person. I was always causing trouble and smoking weed whenever I wanted and not respecting my mom. Later, while I was improve in my behavior, I ended up doing some stupid shhh, and now I'm in the halls.

While I has doing my time, I ended up thinking of who I was, and I didn't like who I was. I felt ashamed of myself that I just straightened myself up and now I am a new man! But even though I changed my ways, I'm still smoking what I want to smoke. But I'm still staying out of trouble to be a good person.

Well, I guess that's all I really wanted to say. Alrato, Beat, much amor!

-Smokey

From The Beat: Thanks for the amor... We believe you're a good person, but unless it's smoking weed that got you here, there are some other behaviors you're going to have to work on. Don't fall for the line that if you are doing better, then you can still get away with doing a little dirt. That kind of thinking leads young people right to the hall! What are your plans for when you get out of here?

Giving A Speech About Who You Are

I am a young ninja surviving in these mean streets. Runnin' around with my knuckleheads from the jets. Tryin' to not end up like my dead homies and on the gang injunction papers. I know what I'm gonna be and my homies do to.

-Er-Daddy-O

From The Beat: The way not to end up on the gang injunction papers is not to be part of the gang.

Dear Mama

This your son and I'm keepin' it real.
It could take a million words to express how I feel.
Daddy's gone, but sometimes I be wishin' he's here.
But it takes a real man to make and raise some kids.
Daddy's gone, hold on strong, so we strole up hill.
I got a whole lot of dreams that I'm trying to fulfill.
Tired of group home livin', so I'm striving for Mills
Hooked up wit Lil' Gutta, he gone cut me a record deal.
I went to church last week to have a chat with the preacher.
I remember her from school, she was my first grade teacher.

When she asked about you, Mama, I didn't know what to say.

Straight up lied in church and said you doin' okay.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: We admire how you put this poem together, but we wish there were more details in it. For example, why isn't your mama doing okay? Is it because your dad is no longer there? Did he pass away, or walk away? What kind of record do you want to cut? What do you hope to get out of Glen Mills? Write more!

Back In The Slammer

Wassupee with the homies from The Beat? I'm back "home sweet home" in unit 6. but sadly I'm just here for medical. I've been up at the Ranch. I've been down and out for a minute. But I'll be back in da 'hood in a quick sec.

I'm hot right now, though. I just got the news that my vato is back in the slammer. And he just came back from Nicaragua. Ride it out homie and stay up. You know this brotherly, sisterly love never stops. You know we can't stop and won't stop.

-Cuba

From The Beat: To be honest, we expect more from you than the usual "can't stop won't stop" crap. To keep it as real as we can, you absolutely can stop (whether you will or not), and you even more absolutely can be stopped. Why give the system that kind of power over you?

What's Up Beat?

It's ya boy Ryhda, ya heard me. Ain't nothin' really new wit' me, ya dig? Same ol', same ol', just a new day. Two ta three weeks left in this lil' hole, ya heard, They shippin' ya boy to ROP. I'm ready ta get up there and knock that shhh out so I can go 'bout my business, ya dig?

In one of the topics it asked about a change since the first day I came in. Well, I change a lil' good and bad. The good thing is self-control, but the bad is... Man, can't discuss it, ya dig.

But yeah, that's all that's been goin' on wit' me. I'm waitin' fa dat time ta get my time started.

-JR Ryhda

From The Beat: We'll miss you in these workshops, and we hope you write us from ROP and tell us how it is. Whatever the "bad" is that you can't tell us about, we sure hope it doesn't wipe out the good... Ya dig?

Back In The Hall

What 'sup with The Beat? You know yo ninja Junk back in the halls for some punk-ass shhh. But yeah, I just got out of the grouper like a week ago and came back to this place for a gun charge. But you know they can't hold a ninja forever. I really don't got stuff to say so gone! They can't hold Junk forever.

-Lil' Junk

From The Beat: There are two things that worry us about the way you're looking at things, Lil' Junk. First, describing a gun charge as "some punk-ass shhh" is not responsible. Gun charges are always serious, and they always carry serious consequences, whether you think they should or not. And second, don't fall for the nonsense that they can't hold you forever. That depends on you and what you do. There are thousands of people (including young people) being held in California prisons on Life Without Parole sentences, not to mention more than 600 on death row! All of them will be held forever. A word to the wise...

Not That Bad

What's good with The Beat? If I can give a speech about myself, I would tell everyone that I'm not as 'hood as everyone think I am. But I don't know why everyone think that I'm just this bad person when they don't even know me. But when you get to know me you will see that I'm not that bad.

-Acie

From The Beat: What are your good points, and what are your bad ones? Do you plan to change any of the things you do that might lead people to think you're worse than you really are? Like what?

A Young Man With Potential

A speech on me before I got locked would be a young man with potential, with good grades, sneaky, a kid who never missed school or even a period, but on the low would do unlawful things every once in a blue moon. A young man devoted to his love for one girl or young lady and trying to keep a job and his baby's mamma fed. Also this young man is willing to go without eating just so he could feed his love of his life and his wife and baby mamma and his everything.

-G

From The Beat: You still have all the potential you ever saw in yourself. But potential is nothing more than potential if you don't act on it. Stop doing those unlawful things that give the system all the power it needs to take you from the love of your life...

Working Out My Aggressions

When I'm in my room and I'm mad, I feel like I wanna hurt somebody. So I shadow box or do some exercise like push-ups, sit-ups, and jumping jacks. Most of the time it works. Sometimes it doesn't work, so I'm ready to fight.

-Bizz

From The Beat: Sounds like you've developed a successful strategy (most of the time) for avoiding beefs. Good for you.

Life Without It

How's life wit'out it? I don't know but I know how it feels ta lose someone who you loved. I'ma stop runnin' shhh anyway. I don't wanna die, but if I have to, I'm takin'

some bodies wit' me. Dyin' make family stress and wives too.

-Quan

From The Beat: We had to take out most of what you wrote because it's not appropriate for The Beat. No gangs, no shout outs, no threats (even though we left in your threatening promise to take some bodies with you). Even your Beat name is no appropriate, so if you want to be published in this magazine, respect us!

People Stink

Man, things are messed up in the halls. People stink and they do not wash theirself.

-Rat

From The Beat: Poor hygiene is something to worry about. But so is laziness! If all you can come up with in an hour's time is two sentences that tell us nothing more than this, we don't think you take your own writing very seriously. Maybe it's time to focus on yourself.

The Mean Friend

I know a mean friend and a lot of people know him to. That mean person is me. When I see them ninjas, my ADHD buzzer starts to go off. I need to calm down and have a cool head and sit back and be quiet and don't get violent and somebody doesn't get hurt.

-Er-Daddy-O

From The Beat: How successful have you been about keep it cool so that nobody gets hurt? The fact that you're here suggests you need to work on this...

What's Up Beat?

How's y'all feelin? This be Vago. Some know me, some hate me, but I don't trip off the haters because they can't stop me. Because I can't stop and won't stop.

But besides that, I want to talk about this one time. Well, it was the last time I was on the outs it started out good. Woke up at about noon, hit the block by two. It was good, a hot day out. The girls just got out of school. I didn't go to school because it was testing for the 9, 10 and whoever didn't pass the exit exam. I passed it.

Like an hour an a half later the GTF (Gang Task Force) pull up on me when I was talking to a girl. The cops arrest me for fighting for the "cause," but I'm get out soon if not on the way to the pen I go, ya dig. I'm out beat.

-Vago

From The Beat: To be honest, Vago, we're pretty tired of reading that nonsense line, "I can't stop and won't stop." That's nothing more than a cop out, a lie. Maybe you won't stop, but that's a choice you make. (If you can't stop, it's because someone is holding a gun to your head, or you have an incurable disease. Which one is it?)

Sexy Love

At first it was only puppy love. It started off with just a kiss.

Now I'm watchin you close, your eyes tight and watchin' you bite your lips.

I'm askin' you, "Like this?" and you telling me, "Yes! Do that there!"

Baby I'm givin' you my best, I hope you ready for round two.

-Savioso

From The Beat: We're sorry, Savioso, but we had to take almost all of your very fine, but very x-rated poem out. It's just not appropriate for The Beat. But we liked it. It's tight.

What's Up

What's up with it Beat Within? Me, I guess I good. I missed writing to da Beat an' expressing what I feel. What's up wit' Perry? Is he still working there? I remember seeing him in the outs. Well yeah, I just wanna say what's up to da homies in here and to stay up. I'll see ya on the outs one day. Stay safe.

-Lil' Roach

From The Beat: There really isn't much in this piece, Lil' Roach, and we almost didn't publish it. Next time you write, say something meaningful.

Life Sucks

What's good Beat This Lil' J locked up at YGC for a dumb-ass case. It's bad that I'm locked up but now my family don't want nothing to do with me. Today my PO came and told me what going to happen tomorrow. She said that I'm not going to get out for another three months 'cause none of my family wants me. So that's why life sucks!

-Lil' T

From The Beat: There's not doubt that life sucks SOMETIMES. But we're sure, if you look back, there are times when life is also wonderful. Our experience tells us that you have a lot to do with which one it's going to be. If you're in for a "dumb-ass case," then it's probably time to stop doing dumb-ass things!

The System

My head twisted, education real low
All I know is to hate my kind from the get go
As the years pass, I see the slave owners comin' closer
No one else can see it, but it's bigger than a NY poster
The slave owner tellin' the thugs, "Do what you do"
The police watchin', tellin' each other, "They waitin' on you"
KKK still here, but ain't gotta do no work
They watchin' us put ourselves in dirt
The system is made for failure, especially for us brothas
POs, judges, they all ninja hunters
They know we smoke weed, so why test us?
Because that's just another reason for them to arrest us
Send us to Glen Mills—eighteen months and call it
blessin' us
The POs like to keep us on a tight leash
But they say we untamed, so they don't wanna release

-Mystery Man

From The Beat: Beautiful poem expressing the tragedy of racism in our country. There's evidence of it everywhere, as in the case of the Gena six young black men in Louisiana. And anyone can just look at the statistics of the ratio of people of color who are in juvy and prison viz. a. viz. whites, and compare the breakdown of those numbers to their representation in population in general. How has the racism touched you personally? Have you been hurt or discriminated against simply because of your race?

You Should Win An Oscar

It's some people who just fake the funk, for reals
They wanna act all big and bad
But deep down inside, they're softer than a cotton ball
They go around, puttin' on a show for everyone
But when it's time, they go out or break down
They the first one talkin' 'bout how bad they are
And how they go hard
But go to the halls and start gettin' punked
And start goin' out
Or they be runnin' 'round, talkin' 'bout
"Stop snitchin'," or "Snitches get stitches"
Then they catch a case, even a minor one
And start singin' like "American Idol"
But up here, it's people who run their mouths
And talk to you like they're out their rabbit ass mind
But they do it 'cause they know ya ain't gonna touch 'em
They think that makes 'em tough
But they know fo' sho'
They wouldn't try it on the outs
But they're so good at it
I'd have to nominate 'em for an Oscar

-Birdman

From The Beat: You're right, Birdman, there are young men who front, try to act all bad, but remember, many are still growing, testing themselves, challenging the world to see how people react to them. That's what growing up entails. So instead of feeling superior to them, can you try to understand them? Maybe even let them know they don't have to act like they're "all that" to be accepted? How can you show people you like and appreciate them just as they are?

I Took Over The Circus

The murder man picture me lurkin'
Right there behind ya curtain
Nine's squirtin'
And we go huntin' where it's hurtin'
But if I hear him hurtin'
I'm a walk over and murk 'em
I took over the circus
'Cause I'm a act a clown
If you put ya foot down
On my surface
I walk around
He pounds in surface
To spin yo' ass around in circles
You erkel

-Mike

From The Beat: You're describing a scene where you're watching what someone else may start, but, really, even on the outskirts, aren't you already in the drama? MAYBE YOU'RE PROTECTING PEOPLE FROM SOMEONE WHO MAY HAVE IN MIND MURDERING SOMEONE, BUT IF YOU'RE USING A WEAPON, TOO, ISN'T THERE JUST MORE SERIOUS MESS? HOW CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HOMIES, FAMILY, SAFE WITHOUT INCREASING THE HORROR AND VIOLENCE?

Dang, Kevin

Bang, bang, click click
I am running out of bullets
Talking to Satan
Why God telling me, "Don't pull it"?
I gotta have drugs right now—I am going through it
This life I see so clearly, now that my head is clear
I've been living in the incubator for eleventh months clear
As I freeze time and listen to the thoughts run through
my mind
But let's start to go deeper
Running through life
Trying to dodge the reeper
Greeze, geepers creepers
I am going to start my new life
Leaving the 'hood rats alone
And picking up a new wife
It was once dark
Now the batteries power a new light
Ain't nobody trying stop the crisis going on
I just gotta keep my life going on
I can't do wrong, 'cause now I am too grown
I'm tired of people telling me I do belong
But not to this society
And how come every time somebody die
They lie to me?
It's raining right now
So the angels cry to me
To be somebody
I gotta thrive to be
I know everywhere I drive
The devil's going to drive with me
Probably sitting in the car, riding with me
Telling me to smoke crack
Like he did Bobby and Whitney
I pray that my problems don't kick me
So switch me to heaven
I am a whole new person
Signed, Kevin
Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: Is the heart of the problem, when you're first back on the outs, living without the drama of the streets? Is the danger, the wildness, the tragedy of the streets, the fact that so many of your homies are out there, the real lure, the basic seduction, as well as the easy money and drugs? If so, now that you're pretty much alone, how will you stay strong and away from any mess?

This Last Time It Hit Me

If I were to give a speech about who I am now, and then who I was before. I would say I've changed my point of view of how I look at things now, because before everything was like a joke to me.

Every time I got caught up by the police, not only was I hurting myself but I was hurting my mom, emotionally and financially. Looking at my brother's footsteps, watching him go in and out of the hall. I looked at it like it was nothing, it was cool'.

But now that he is an adult and on his own, I look at his past tellin' myself that's not the way to go. I been in and out for three years and I never thought I would change my ways, but this last time I got locked up it hit me.

I told myself I don't want to spend my life in prison. I want to go to college and do something with my life.

- P

From The Beat: Congratulations! This reads like a serious change of heart, the kind that can truly change a person's life for the better. Now that you've made this promise to yourself, what kinds of concrete steps can you take to make college happen? Do you have a teacher you can trust and talk to about your ambitions, either in the hall or your own school? The more help and support you ask for, the easier it will be to make these dreams come true!

Learning, Little by Little

I am a person who is cool to talk to. But I made the biggest mistake by coming here. I should of thought of that before I did whatever I did.

But I'm learning little by little. I'm trying to change as much as I can before I do something stupid. But it's going to be different before I get out, because I don't want to come back in here.

So what I'm going to do is get a job and keep myself busy and I'm going to stay home and just kick it with my girl and be good.

-Jacob

From The Beat: A job will definitely help, and so will school. What will be your biggest temptation out there? Maybe if you figure out what it is, it will be easier for you to come up with ways to fight it!

Disappointment

Well what's up Beat! I've been disappointed many times, like when my dad said he was going to stop drinking but he never did. That shhh makes me hella mad. Well that's pretty much it, 'till next time. Late.

-Abe

From The Beat: This is a clear example of a big let-down. Thank you for connecting our readers to such a serious and personal frustration.

Life Complications

This Ace up, on this Beat
Rappin' hard with my lyrical ability
To open a brighter road
For me and my family
Letting no one stop me
From enemies

To political individuals
These flows are written from visions
I seen on daily basis

Too many faces to remember
Because of my life complications
From a jail cell, I'm reminiscing on good times
This life of sin, this life of mines
Just wishing for a better day
To come my way
But it never does change

-Ace

From The Beat: You get to the heart of the matter in this flow - wishing for a better day just isn't enough, is it? You need to make that better day yourself. But how can you do that? What would you need to change to make that happen?

A Friend Who Isn't There For You

I had a friend that he said he would be there. Then I'm at the spot for thirty minutes and he never called me to tell me that he won't be there. I always have to call him to see what happened!

Then he pick up his phone and said "Sorry but I did not call you cause I had no time." And that just got me mad, but I'm not his friend no more. I got some better friends that when they say that they be at the spot, they are there for me.

-David

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting yourself some more trustworthy people. A friend you can't depend on is no friend at all. What are the other qualities you look for in the people you get close to?

By Myself

When my mood changes I get mad and I don't want to talk to anybody. I just wanna be by myself. Because if someone's with me I'm gonna go end up doing something stupid that may make me end up locked up again. That's how my moods change me.

-Unknown

From The Beat: So you like to work out your feelings on your own. That's a good thing to know about yourself, that you need solitude when you're upset. On the other hand, does it ever help to write about it, or to talk to one person quietly about what you're going through?

Chicano

I am brown but being black or white is firme
But being brown is where I'm found
Holding my fist up in the air
Showing that I'm Chicano and that I care
The 'hood I now live in
To give forever to stay one day
When I reach my goal
I will have the future between my soul.
Right now I ain't got much
But I got my pride
That's more then any other fool has inside
Right now I'm locked up in one community with no opportunity. Being Chicano.

-Caesar

From The Beat: The killing violence and hate between north and south, red and blue, is doing terrible things to hurt the greatness of Chicano culture. We hear your pride but will you live it/instead of taking life you must give it/Move beyond your street, your hood/Love your PEOPLE, all sides - find the good.

Very Quick Mood Swings

I notice my mood changes very quick. I get mad and I start to throw punches at any one. I guess it's because I'm bi-polar.

I get a mood change if anyone talks bad about me. I could be very happy for a while but then I'll be mad, and sometimes I'll get sad.

-Alex

From The Beat: The good news about being bi-polar, now as opposed to even ten years ago, is that with the right meds and the right therapy, you can live a happy and strong life where those ups and downs aren't so devastating to you and your loved ones. Keep us posted on how you're feeling.

My Life

Hey, what's up Beat Within? It's me, once again – your homie Stranger. Well, this time I have to talk about my life.

Before I got locked up, my lady told me she might be pregnant and I didn't care. The same night I got mad at her and went outside with my ninja's to do some work for the hood and I was thinking about what my lady told me before I left the house and I wasn't thinking of what we were doing and after we were going back to our hood, the cops pulled us over. I didn't know what to do and I tried to run, but the police got me.

Since then, I been here -- five months and I haven't talked to my lady. I don't know anything about her and I don't know if she pregnant or not and I don't know what to do. Well there is nothing else to say until next time.

-Stranger

From The Beat: This is really intense and must have been weighing heavily on your mind this past five months. Is there anyway to get in touch with her? Or to reach out to any of your friends who might know her? It seems like it would be good for both of you to communicate again.

Mean

I was smart and a nice person while I was not locked up.

I'm still a nice and smart person, but more hard-headed. I stick up for myself.

I have a lot of love for my family and my boyfriend.

I don't like meeting new people.

I like sticking to who I know.

What makes a person mean is either hate inside or being mad about something, or they just chose to be mean.

I act the same.

I'm always laughing and I'm always open, so people start being more happy when they are with me,

'cause I don't care what people think of me.

-Ruby

From The Beat: It's good to be open and not care what people think, but at the same time sometimes we need to be sensitive to others feelings and needs. Of course you need to stick up for yourself in the Hall, but don't lose your openness.

Meaningful Lyrics And Thoughts

"I tried so hard and got so far, but in the end it doesn't even matter." -Linkin Park.

These lyrics relate to me and my football career. I worked so hard for so many years at perfecting my skills.

Freshman year, I won Freshman of the Year for my league. The same award for my sophomore year.

I got a few offers for college and got a free trip to Boise, Idaho to work out for the coach. I ended up getting a 50% scholarship and was planning on going to Boise University in the Fall of '07.

Last January I made a horrible mistake by getting into a fight and I took it way too far. So here I am now, in the Fall of '07 locked up for 6 months. I just try to stay optimistic and take as much of this experience to heart as I possibly can.

-C

From The Beat: We can certainly screw things up in a blink after working so hard. Why do you think that is C? Perhaps we lack deep gratitude for the people who helped us, and gratitude for the opportunities that come our way. Lack of gratitude, what a dangers thing—it can crumble any person....

My Boyfriend

What's up, Beat readers? Well today, I'm going to write how I feel bad for being locked up. Well it's messed up how I fell apart again.

The day I turned myself in I went to my pad first. I had gotten a letter from my man. It was kind of messed up because in my letter he was telling me that he hopes I'm doing good on EMP and I'm that I better pass that shhh. But now look where I'm at?

He does not know that I'm here, but I'll be out soon. I just wanted to let him know that once I'm out, I'm out for good and that I'll be there for him no matter what. Well, that's all I got to say for now. I'll be thinking about him and he'll always be on my mind and I'll never forget about him. So till next time.

-Happy

From The Beat: It sounds like both you and your man should be honest with each other in order to give each other support through these hard times. Use his words as inspiration to get out and do better, not as something to feel guilty about.

I Wish, Oh I Wish...

Everyday that goes by

I wish would go a little faster

because I'm so tired of looking at these walls that drive me so crazy.

I feel that my strength,

power and will to stay strong

is getting a little lazy –

my memories of what life was like on the outs gets even more hazy.

Day in and day out,

I wish my eyes could see a different sight.

Because it's almost to the point

where my mind's going to go completely crazy.

-Lil' Sapita

From The Beat: Another piece straight from the heart! You say your "will to stay strong is getting lazy" but it seems like you are working hard to think about all your problems. Don't lose faith and keep writing, this will be your path to healing.

Bay Area Music Review

I think rap relates to my life because I enjoy listening to it and I make my own slaps. I'll be hittin' a studio when I get out. I should of done been hit a studio a coo ass minute ago like around April, but I got locked up in March and haven't had been out since. So when I get out we'll see what happens. Ya boy from San Jose 'bout to hop on the music track so get with the San Jose business.

I'm also going to write about my favorite artist and album its D-MOE the youngsta – Can you feel me? That's my favorite CD. It was made in '93 its old shhh, but I'm down wit' the early 90's Bay shhh. I like it better than the hyphy movement that's goin' on now

That hyphy shhh goes hard as well though. Me and my kinfolks is gonna put San Jose on the map.

I get out in February, so I'll be hittin' the studio around then, so I'm gonna try to get my boys to produce my shhh so I'm gonna try to have an album out by July or August. We'll see what happens though. Ya boy 'bout to do it big.

-Shaggy White

From The Beat: We don't get as many culture pieces as perhaps would be great. Thanks for your music review of sorts. You touch on cultural movements: from the early 1990s to the hyphy movement in the early 2000s. Music reviews could serve to connect readers with youth culture; there much to review (the good and the bad).

Who I Am

What up, Beat? This is my first time writing you.

Well before I got locked up I was on the streets of San Jose, just chillin' with the homeboys putting it down out there.

Well, I got locked up for fighting a rival gang member at school, but what sucks was his older brother is a cop. That messed my life up, out of six of us I am the only one that got locked up, my homeboys got EMP for 60 days.

When I get out, I gotta go do 60 days EMP too. So I can say I am experiencing a lot in here by listening to what others have to teach me. I don't ignore them. I listen to what they have to say.

Who I am today I am a gang banger from San Jose, kicking it with the homeboys, just chillin' – taking out our rivals. I know gang banging isn't the way to go but I was born and raised into it –so I became it. So that's who I am. Stay up out there, see you real soon.

-Negro

From The Beat: This is a really interesting piece because it shows how unknown forces can really affect your future. The fact that the person you got in a fight with had a relative in the police force seemed to have affected your life. You say that you were born into gang life, but what we don't believe that is the end for you. Maybe spending time in the Hall will help you think of a different path.

A Speech About Who I Am

Who I am now is kind of a different person because I have only been here for a month. But I believe that I changed because I am more serious and now I know how it is to get my freedom taken away. I have learned now to take care of myself.

Before I was locked up, I did not give a damn or care about consequences, but now I do. But I guess it is too late now.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Of course it's not too late now! It's only too late if you don't learn the lesson that you say you have learned. How you act from now forward will determine whether or not that lesson has been learned.

My Hidden Talent

I would say I have one hidden talent and that would be my computer skills. My computer at home was built by me. And I know basic programming, video editing, and I'm pretty damn good with photoshop.

-Shane

From The Beat: Sounds like the foundation for a very good job. Those are valuable skills in this new world of ours. Get yourself straightened up. Finish school. Maybe go on to college. Earn yourself a good life.

Moody Dude

Hello Beat, I'm over here housed in this Juvenile Hall down in San Jose, CA. Well, our topic today is: How do your moods change you?

Well, when I'm in a bad mood I don't care what I do and I'll go out and get in trouble and get myself locked up, how I am now. Then when I'm in a good mood I can be a good guy out with my friends and just having fun without breaking the law, go looking for jobs and doing hobbies we like to do. That's how my moods change me. Stay up, I'm out!

-Droopy G

From The Beat: How can you stay in a good mood more often then? Or how can you take your bad mood and turn it around without getting in trouble? You seem like a positive and unique person who can do whatever he puts his mind to, so stay up.

Am I In For Good?

Hey was up Beat? Well, how I'm different now is that I'm doing time, compared to how I was in the streets – gang banging and keeping it gangster. But now I have a baby on the way – a baby girl and damn, when I get out ... I'm not gonna sit here and lie. Shhh, I'm still gonna keep it gangsta but I'm gonna cool down 'cause of my daughter and I'm gonna try my best to stay out and be with my family that waits for me in the outs. But like they say, once you a gangsta, you always a gangsta.

So to all doing time, stay up and get out this hole to be with your loved ones. Stay up.

-Dg

From The Beat: Thanks for being honest, but do you think you're just falling into a trap set by society that makes you think you are always going to be a gangster, when really you could change?

My Twisted Head

I don't give a shhh about you.

I don't give a shhh about your life.

I don't give a shhh about what you did.

These are my feelings, so don't judge.

Got a problem? Don't talk shhh, take flight.

I smoke 'till the day I die.

Fudge my health, it's my damn body.

Fudge the system and fudge who all works for it.

You look like a person that I'd like to smack.

Fudge friends, I have acquaintances.

I could give a shhh about your life.

I don't keep friends, I only have family.

Friends come and go, but family is always there.

They will never leave you, I love my family but fudge you.

I don't trust no dumb shhh that might be a back stabber,

so if you don't like what I say then don't read this.

This is my twisted mind that I cannot control.

There is no one to care, only my family.

Life gives lemons so make lemonade.

-Yogi

From The Beat: Each week as you write, you seem to be getting more clarity just by writing out your thoughts. It seems like you have up big walls and don't trust anyone, but are trying to figure it out and communicate. What is it about smoking that you like so much besides escaping from the world?

A Shady Friend

Well, me and my boy did a burglary. I guess dude found out and called the cops. I stole a go-ped and a PS2, plus 300 dollars. I left the PS2 at my boys pad and the detective came to my pad at like eight in the morning. I had spray painted the go-ped and spent the three bills on bud, so they found the go-ped and my boy snitched on me. I got a new charge and that's a shady friend.

-L

From The Beat: What would you have done in your friend's place? Are you still friends with him? How did you get caught so quickly?

If These Walls Could Yakkity Yak

I think if the walls could talk they wouldn't shut up. They've probably heard so many stories and dramas that each wall could write many stories. Some of the stories might be interesting, but most of them are probably the same old stuff.

-S

From The Beat: Well, we'd like to hear them, at least the interesting ones. Can you think of one?

Moody Me

My mood always changes the way people look at me. Some days I can be hell a coo' and others I can turn in to a complete b.... So, basically I have a short fuse. I get mad hell a easily. And some people don't like being around me because I'll start smashing on the first person I see that dogs me or starts running their mouth. So my moods always affect me and the people I hang around with.

-Minnie Mouse

From The Beat: It almost sounds like you are proud of having such a bad temper, instead of wanting to change it. What steps are you taking to improve this issue so it isn't so hard on the people around you?

How My Moods Change Me

What's the bidness, Beat? It's lil' Adam out the max, you know. My mood change when I am not able to do what I wanna do when I wanta do it. Like, for example, I am not able to be wit' my baby mama while she's pregnant 'cause I done stuck to the turf like cleats and got caught up in the game, fa reals. But yup, that's what gets ma moods swangin'.

-Lil' Adam

From The Beat: You made the choice not to be with your baby's mama by allowing yourself to get caught up and taken from her. Now that you're about to be a father, we hope you can take the focus off yourself and put it where it belongs — on your child. He needs a father!

Change

Today I can definitely tell you that I've pretty much changed my old habits of what I was doing and thinking about today.

On the outs, all I could think about was how was I going to get some money for some beer and for some bomb and who could I hustle? How could I make up some excuse to ditch school today? What else can I do to mess up my life even worse, basically....

My time in the hall has changed me a lot. I've been studying to get my GED. I've been on "A" level the whole time I've been here, haven't got into any fights. Don't even think about my hustles anymore. I guess I'm just starting to see things more clearer now, and it was right in front of me the whole time.

-Andrew

From The Beat: It seems that if you can really keep your head up, being locked up can give you clarity on your actions. You seem to have done this for yourself, so good job and good luck.

Turning Things Around

One thing that I always wanted from my mom, was her to believe me. Ever since I've been getting in trouble I've been lying to everyone to get out of trouble. My mom caught me in a lie, many times. So she use to always tell me that she doesn't believe me.

Ever since I got locked up, I feel like me and my mom got closer. She's actually on my side, she actually stands by my side. She actually tells me she loves me. I think its because I'm not around any more, and she realizes that its too hard for her when I'm locked up. We are way more open to each other. Now I don't hide anything from her, even if I know she's going to be mad. Well that's all I got for you Beat, so I see you next week.

-L-R

From The Beat: Many of us dig ourselves so deep into a bad situation that it takes even more effort to fix everything, right? One of the worst things is to be thought of as a 'liar.' Great that you have turned things around with your mom; we all got something to turn around.

On To Turlock

Well Beat I'm not feeling these topics this week, so I'm just gonna say that I'm getting out tomorrow. So peace I'm going to Turlock so hopefully I don't get in trouble over there and get locked up, 'cause if I do, I will come back here and go to a lock down. So wish me luck I'm gonna do coo' over there, got to go. Later.

-Chris

From The Beat: Good luck to you, Chris, and drop us a line to let you know how it's going in Turlock!

It Took Several Times

The Hall didn't change me until my third time in, after I failed my first placement, Excell Center in Turlock.

Little by little, I started to realize that the shhh I was doing wasn't OK. It was stupid and immature little games I was playing, and caused a lot of grief for me and my family, and that I should do something about it instead of just screwing around.

So I told my P-O and she told me she would tell the judge how I feel. I am hoping the judge will give me another chance at home, and if he does I'm going to make the best of it and try my best to stay out of trouble.

Getting through this system has really taught me a lot and saved me. I should treat people better. And I have God to show me the way and inspire me a little more.

-Michael

From The Beat: We hope the judge hears what you say and how you feel, because everyone deserves a second chance. What kinds of things do you think you will do differently when you get out? What specific changes will you have to make?

Court Dates

What's up Beat! This is your girl Huera, just dropping by to show you guys some mad love.

Well, my topic is about the days I go to court. First off, I hate going to court because I get all stressed out. I don't know what to expect in court that's why I hate it. When I go in the room with the judge, my heart starts beating faster and faster and my face starts to get pink because I'm nervous. Then when the judge says I'm not getting released it hurts me so bad like a pin went through my heart. Then I start having tears come down my eyes. I say my goodbye to my mom and bounce back to my unit.

When the judge says I will get released, I put a smile on my face and start having tears of joy! I had the most wonderful happiness I've had ever felt in my whole life.

Well I'm gonna end this right here. Till next time! Much Love.

-Huera

From The Beat: Yes, the stress of court dates can really take their toll on you. What advice do you have for others to prepare for court? Maybe taking some deep breaths and really trying to stay calm.

The Mean Friend

I had a friend that turned his back on me. He started snitching on me to my dad telling him what I did in school. Then my dad came to school and started looking for me.

He found me and told me to get in the car. I was crying. It when I was in the 7th grade. Then when we got home my dad started to scream at me. Then I did it I stole a car in Florida it was a B.M.W it was black.

-David

From The Beat: Wait — what was it your friend told your Dad about? Stealing the car? It sounds like this has the making of a complex story, what do you think it was that made your dad so mad? It sounds like he really wants you to do well!

There's More

There's more life for me to live
but it seems there is nothing more for me to discover
because in this crazy life every thing that comes around
goes around

but not everything that you see will seem real
but once you find yourself in a cell a lot of you will heal.

Not knowing what to do until your time runs out.
Only leaving the life that has been chosen for you, until
death is near.

-A long life

From The Beat: Many people think that the only way outside the life they find themselves in is death, that there is no other exit. Certain this is a reasonable idea, since as you describe the confusion or craziness of life can mess-up our perception of reality. How do we get past our distorted perception and find the exit?

Writing A Book For The Time Capsule

If I could put something in a time capsule, it would be a book that I wrote about my life. I would explain the way that it was growing up in my neighborhood. I would explain the struggles we had to go through with the police. I would tell them how not to have a crooked ass government and give the government much power. I would write about the laws that effect a lot of people in prison. Hopefully the new society that reads this doesn't make the same mistakes.

-Chico

From The Beat: Your book could be an important one. But tell us, do you think people learn best by being told what not to do or by being told what to do. If you tell readers what things to avoid, you're not telling them what they should be doing. Guess you can't tell others how to solve problems until you solve some of them yourself, right...

My Regrets

First time writing about this! Being locked up remembering the time that I made my mom bleed, about the stupid things I did. I'd get mad, taking it out on her, showing my homies more love than I showed my family every time.

I look at my mom it breaks me 'cause I cant see her. Good thing I stop gangbangng. I ain't going back for nothing that's dead for me now since they killed my grandpa.

-Jesse

From The Beat: It sounds like there's even more behind this story, both in terms of what happened with your mom and the drama with your grandpa. It's like you've already lived a lifetimes worth of struggle in just the few short years you've been on the planet! What happened to your grandpa?

Change When I Get Out

When I get out I am going to do good, because I went to court today and the judge told me that I was lucky that I'm going to the Ranch and not C.Y.A. The judge said if I come back next time I am going to the Y. That's why I want to change when I get out.

I want to get my life straight and not go to the Y. It's not worth it. I need to stop doing what I do on the outs which is robbing people. So what I need to do is not come back and go to school and do what I need to do and get off P.O!

-Unknown

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting the Ranch instead of CYA! It sounds like you already know what you need to stop doing, so what will you do instead? To make money and have fun? Do you know where you could get a job? Do you play sports? Do you have positive friends you can spend your time with?

Shady Homie

My shady homie was hating on game. I was trying to get at this girl, but my boy was on the side telling her I had a lady and all this whoop. Shady. But you feel me? I just found that out. But I still got her. Ha! That's what's up. Shady character though, but still my boy. Just won't put my life in no ones hands. It's yourself for yourself, so don't just think it's coo' to trust anyone. Better catch yourself.

-Mondo

From The Beat: Hmmm, it's cool that this shady friend is still one of your boys even though he talked about you to this girl. Was he telling the truth? Did he like the girl too? There is a saying: All is fair in love and war - do you believe that?

If These Smelly Walls Could Talk

If these walls could talk they would talk about some of the nastiest crap they've seen. Like kids eating disgusting things, like kids defecating in socks, like kids peeing in the vents. When they are locked up, some kids do things they wouldn't do at home. I know. I've had some disgusting roommates. They've done gross things. I can't even tell you what one of them did with his feces. If these walls could talk they would advise kids not to come to juvenile hall.

-Da Kid

From The Beat: OK, we get the picture, and it isn't pretty, but you painted it well. And your advice is obviously good.

What I Use To Do Back Then

I'll be posted on the corner of my street, smoking a blunt or not, slanging on my street. I'd hit them up and say "Where you from. That's how I earn my living.

I'll just be walking all over my hood and talk to girls, and now just for my mom I had to change. That's why I don't do the stuff I used to do, and I live in the San Jose. My name is Abel.

This is now I got locked up.

-Abel

From The Beat: It sounds like your mom means a lot to you. Have you figured out how you're going to change? Do you think it will be hard to resist the temptation of the street once you get out? What are you going to replace that old lifestyle with?

I Learned Respect

My name is Jorge. Well now that I'm in here I've really changed in many ways.

Before I came into the hall my first time, I used to smoke weed and crystal meth.

While I was on drugs I didn't care about anyone. I used to yell at my mom. I didn't care about what she was saying to me.

She used to tell me things for my own good but I always took it the wrong way. Everything she did for me I took for granted. Now that I'm in here I realized that I was being messed up to her.

Last time I got out I listened to her more.

The point I'm trying to make is that I changed by learning to respect and be thankful for everything I get. That's how I changed. With all due respect ...

-Jorge

From The Beat: A recovering meth addict we know used to call her drug "the soul killer." She said that when she was on it she became a dark person she couldn't even recognize. Is that what happened to you? Because there's one thing that shows in your writing is that you have a great soul. And heart. What other kinds of changes are you planning to make?

Mentally Stronger

Being in these cells
People may say it feels like hell
You can learn a lot about
Being in here like discipline and respect
In here forget yo' hood or set
It ain't worth it to stay in here longer
But you can get mentally stronger
Once you get out
Don't come back
The rules here are whack
If you doing time
For committing a crime...

-Unknown

From The Beat: Seems like being locked up has made YOU mentally stronger. What are you going to do with this new knowledge of discipline and respect from now on? How do you think it will help your life become better and happier?

I Was A Down Homeboy

What cracking Beat? This Lil' Lazie coming from San Jose, going to give you a speech on who I am now, and then who I was a couple months ago.

Well before I got locked up in August I was a down homeboy. I used to smoke a pack of Marlboro's with the homies or smoke a blunt and always had a 40oz in my hand.

I used to do things like smash on someone cause they got funk with the homeboys. I would blow my family off like I had homies before family.

Well since I got locked up for the first time, I learned that my homies who are on the outs aren't the people that are going to show up at your court date and try to help you get released your family is. But also I have changed the way I'ma live on the outs.

I ain't gonna smoke weed no more, just drink every couple weeks. Also when I get out I'ma go to school and graduate and I'ma think about the good and the bad before I do anything that is or can get me back in here because I ain't trying to get back in here.

Well I'm out, late. Everyone keep ya' head up!

- Lil' Lazie

From The Beat: Quitting weed sounds like a good idea and so does going to school and thinking before you act. Are you sure even drinking is a good idea, though? Do you know people who got locked up because of decisions they made when they were drunk? We do - they had a couple beers or some Henn and then suddenly a lot of bad ideas started to look good under the influence. Plus, it's illegal 'til you turn 21! And from what we see here at The Beat, there's only one way to stay clear of the Law - and that's to make sure you never break it and give them an excuse to take you out!

Bad Person vs. Bad Mistake

I'm not a bad person. I just made a bad mistake.

It was the crowd that you be around is what makes you. If you are in a bad crowd that's doing bad things, you'll most likely to do bad things. We all make mistakes, no one is perfect. I've made many mistakes before, but just this time I got caught.

Being in here ain't so bad. You can learn a lot, and learned from yo' mistakes. Being in here you will be respected if you give respect. If you are going to still make mistakes, then keep coming back. I'm out I'm a stay out.

We all make bad choices and have bad actions. But don't get caught up so often.

-A Good Person

From The Beat: Here's a question, what would you consider to be the worst choice you ever made? What's the best? What will be the first choice you have to make when you get out?

My Moods Change Me...

...because one day I might have a bad mood, and a staff might say something that I don't like. Since I was in a bad mood I start talking shhh to the staff --and that was because I was in a bad mood.

-Spider

From The Beat: The problem with this is that staff has all the power, so actually the person that gets hurt by your bad mood is you. Is there anything you can do to help yourself get over these moods so that they won't make things harder for you?

Moving

What up Beat and all you Beaters? How's it hanging?! Hope all is well. Well I ain't feeling any of these topics tonight, but I'm gonna write about things I can't wait to do when I get out.

Well, since my mother moved to Morgan Hill without letting me know, I'm gonna be meeting new people. I wonder how the girls are? Hmm.... I can't wait to get out and find out.

Let me tell you something though, just because my family moved away from my hometown, don't mean I'm gonna stay away from my old ways, no sir! When I get off house arrest I'm still gonna go to San Jose everyday! And when I get off probation, I'm gonna move back to San Jose because that's where all my people are at.

I'm gonna be 18 when I get off probation anyway, so I'll be able to live on my own or with a couple of homies, but before I do all that I'm gonna seal my dirty record because if I don't, it'll probably be difficult for me to get a job when I go out to look for one. Anyway, I can't wait to be out with all my homeboys, chillin, posting!

Well that all for today Beat, I'll catch you all later! To all stay up - for those that know me and the ones that don't. Peace!

-Sad Boy

From The Beat: Morgan Hill isn't so bad a place, in fact, it's really nice. But it seems like you know exactly what to do in order to succeed, then again the way you write it does sound like you could fall right back into the trap. The choice is yours!

My Baby Sister

My baby sister is like the sky.

She is the world to me.

I don't know what to do,

I would take a bullet for her.

She is only five and she does not deserve to die.

I have not seen her for five months and that breaks my heart.

She is growing up without me and she is going to the same elementary school that I did.

I guess that every time

I see the picture of her I feel that she is here.

So Beat,

that's my baby sister and baby sister:

I love you till

I hit the grave and her name is Carla.

-Big Sister

From The Beat: You say you would take a bullet for your little sister and that she is so important to you, yet you haven't seen her for five months because you are locked up. Instead of giving up your life for her, it would probably be more beneficial to give up the things that landed you in the Hall, so you can be there for her everyday.

My Speech: Don't Take Your Life for Granted!

If I were to give a speech about how I changed from before I got locked up, I would say:

I really used to take everything for granted like family, friends, food, and freedom. But after being locked up and released a couple times, I realized that I shouldn't take that stuff for granted, because as soon as you do you might end up getting locked up again and you'd miss all those things you thought that people had to give to you.

-Unknown

From The Beat: There's a part two of this speech that we're hoping you get to deliver one day – A speech about how after everything you went through, you changed and started going to school, you got a job, you got closer to your family. The story of how you did that would be an inspiring one to hear. We hope you get to tell that story one day!

Giving A Speech About Who You Are...

What's up Beat Within it's your homeboy Nino coming from the hall but I want to say what up to all the homeboys doing hard time in the max and stay up.

-Nino

From The Beat: You too, Nino, stay up? And how are you going to do that? Do you have a plan for making it up and out of the trouble you're in now?

A Better Person

My name is Joshua. I'm a young teen. I was born and raised in San Jose. I got a chance a couple of months ago to do good, but it didn't work out and I'm in the same place again. I guess I didn't take advantage of that opportunity that they gave me. Hopefully I will get another chance to get out soon.

Once I get out I'ma find a way to live around that life. Like block some of those people out of my life. So I plan to be a better person.

-Joshua

From The Beat: From the thoughtfulness of this piece, we're pretty sure you are already a good person, a good person who needs to figure out some new habits and approaches to life. Which friends do you think you should block? Are there other friends you might want to reconnect with?

That Disappointment

What's up Beat! How you doing today? Me cool! Sometimes I get disappointed for little things like not getting what I want, but this week I really am disappointed in one particular thing.

I'm disappointed at me not being released on Oct 19. I'm getting out in mid November. I'm mad too because I'm getting out on six months aftercare and six months probation. That's a long time. I'm getting bottled and checked up on almost every day when I get out. I need to go to like five different counseling sessions. I also got two POs and two people that are gonna be checking on me. I get new gang orders and new weapon orders I can't be out after 10:00pm. If I violate any of those I can come back. But I know that I can complete all this in that year. The solution that I think would work is that I'm gonna stay clean and do whatever I need to do to pass, I am really confident about passing this program.

Alright that's all I can right now because I'm running out of time. Alright everyone stay up.

-Lil' Indio

From The Beat: You have got quite a program awaiting you once you leave the Hall. Thank you for sharing the detail of your program and your own determination to successfully complete it. The thoughtfulness in which you write this piece suggests that you have the ability to be reflective and to prepare yourself for the reality of the situation.

Streets

Well, when you was going around these cold streets,

I seen nothing but

pain, agony and weeps

because everyone out there will play the game for keeps.

That is why I'm sticking my lil' toys to anyone that trips,

also that is why

I'm in the corner

so keep close attention to this g.

When he stands up and poetry "he" speaks

and busting flows on all you fake fools,

more aside use this young man got talent,

so keep your distance

I just might get violent

-D

From The Beat: The life you choose to live brings pain, agony and weeps. And in that world there's nothing but haters, including you! Yeah, step up and show leadership, 'cause your bragging is old.

Who I Am: That Devil Inside Me

What's up Beat, it's your homeboy Lil' Knuckles.. One topic caught my eye: "Who I am." I have that not caring not having any pity or remorse about anything mentality. I'm a gang member who actually wants more out of life than banging -- I want to do right, but still I will never leave my hood.

That devil inside me would not let me go it's too much pride in my soul just to let it turn into dust and float.

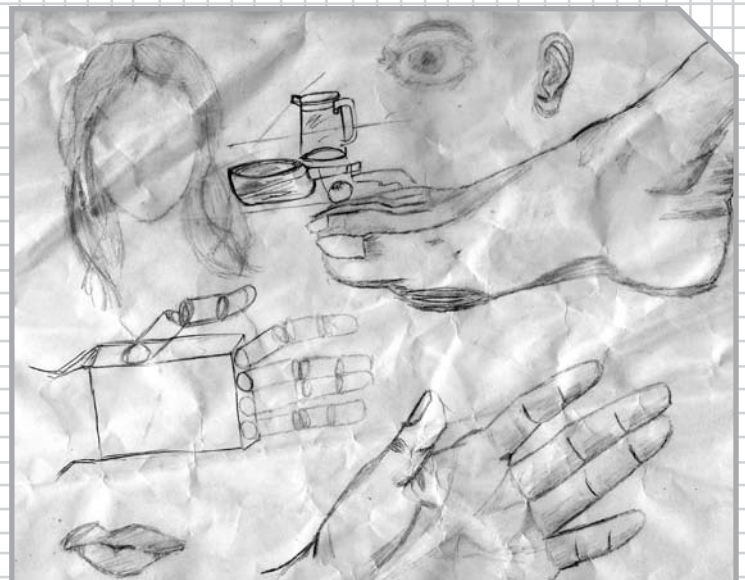
I am a person who reminisces at night, wondering what life's got for me in the future. To tell you the truth I think nowhere.

I am a person who does not have dreams but has movies waking up in the middle of the night trying not to go to sleep knowing the devil still inside me trying to fry.

I am a person who lives in the life of sin.

-Lil' Knuckles

From The Beat: This poem speaks on your death but crackles with life, talks about coldness but pulses with the warmth of your own heart. It's heartbreaking to read you saying that you think you're going "nowhere" when the talent you show could so easily take you somewhere. You say you love your 'hood? GOOD – so become an artist, a teacher, an architect, work to make your 'hood a safer, better place to be!



Lyrics For Rising

The song that relates to me and my life is one of my favorites, it's name "Block Boy Dboy." I wrote it myself! "C-Money" from San Jose, yadadig. Slaps man, it's talking about boot how I'm going do it Godzilla when I touch down. Also, how we go mainey out here. We get our paper man. We out here solid trying to rise like a hot air balloon, ya dig. The song go dumb hard this how we strut out here. Fools think we be playing we tryin' to shine like a polish button, ya dig. But you going to hear this!

-C-Money

From The Beat: Your use of the English language is a great example of the creativity of a lyricist. Your raps in workshops are even more impressive, but if you actually live the life on the streets, you won't get far, probably a ticket back to the hall!

Since I Was Eleven

What up Beat, this is James come from San Jose. I am in the hall, just giving a speech about who I am.

All right, it goes like this: Well I been gangbanging since I was 11. but now I am in the hall just thinking about what I should do when I get out. But now in here, there is no reason to bang.

-James

From The Beat: Gangbanging will always be there on the outs. Are there other things you could do? Do you have family watching over you? Do you go to school? Do you like school? When you were eleven, you were too young to know how bad things could get... but now that you're older, have you changed your mind?

Mad, Sad and Happy

Moods change me by how I act. If I am mad I act stupid and do something I don't want to do, and I have a attitude with everyone. If I'm sad I stay quiet and don't want to talk. And if I'm happy, you know I be hella happy kicking' it wit' the boys... and it's all good.

So that's how I get but not always like that. Sometimes I'm different but it alal depends on what day or who's around but that's just me. I'm out. Peace!

-Elmo

From The Beat: It sounds like the big problem is what happens when you get mad. Have you ever taken an anger management class? Did it help at all?

Stronger Than Before

Well about me and who I am: My name is Felipe, age 18. I guess I can say that I am a better person and smarter than before I came in Juvy Hall, 'cause when I was on the outs I never had time to even sit down and think of myself. I was lost there, always on the go trying to always make others happy before myself.

Now I got all the time I need. I'm sobered up, healthy and stronger than before. I thank God for that 'cause it can be a whole lot worser.

Why can a person be mean? Well I think a person mean because the individual grew up with not so much an easy life, and holds in a lot of deep depressing thoughts or you can say secrets, got beat by his mother or father or another family member for no reason. A person can be mean for a lot of reasons in their life. Then there's people who are mean just 'cause they want to be wicked sometime ain't a good talking.

-Felipe

From The Beat: The first part of this essay talks about how you've found yourself, and the second part proves it - because you take the time out to show compassion for the pain that usually hides behind "meanness". It seems like you know this from close-up. Are there people you know who were treated badly growing up, and acted it out in mean ways?

Me and my Ex-Best Friend

One day I had a best friend, but there was a girl we both used to like. Then he asked her if she wanted to be his girlfriend, but I was there so she said no.

So one day he called her and asked her again if she wanted to be his girlfriend and she told him yes but she didn't like him. Then she was looking for a reason to break up with him and she told him that I said that he had another girlfriend.

So he got mad with me and I didn't know what happened. I went and told him "Hi" and then he wanted to fight with me. So today we are not friends.

-Julio

From The Beat: Wow, what a story. You know, the true "mean friend" in this story sounds like the girl, because she lied about you to him. Have you ever looked at it that way? Do you think if he knew the truth you'd still be friends, or are there other things about him that are messed up?

To My Mom

My topic is about how I am sorry to my mom about what I did.

I will never do it again or try to end up back here for gang- related shhh. I am going to try to stay in school 'cause all I am doing is messing up by not going.

I need to get my act together. You're the only thing I got and I don't want to lose you.

-Creepier

From The Beat: We hope you show this to your mom, but even more, we hope you act on it! Are you ready to back out of gang-related activities, not just to make your mom happy, but to help yourself get out of danger and pain?

All Things Give Me Mood Swings

Well mood swings happen to me every day. Sometimes after I talk on the phone or after a court date, and after a probation visit. All things give me mood swings. To be honest with you, I can go from nice to mean from happy to sad, and from sad to happy I never know.

Or I can just be like I am now, normal, throughout the day.

-Unknown

From The Beat: It sounds like what you're describing is how all humans are... unless you feel like those mood swings are hard to manage or control, and make you do things that you later regret. Have you ever acted on a bad news and then wished you hadn't later on?

Life In The Morning

Life sucks when you're stuck in this box.

Nothing to do but play with your sock

Seeing nothing but white walls and a white window

Hearing unpleasant noise ringing through your ears

Force to have these painful tears

Voices tell you to get up and go brush your teeth,

Don't forget your towel, and wash up

Going back to your box called a cell with a painful sigh

All you can do is yell,

Yell to your mind, going insane

Away from the highway of life

Stuck in this box, like a rock

Stuck in one place with nothing to do

But watch time change, without you

Life sucks when you're locked up

-Potter

From The Beat: This poem is a straight up San Jose Blues, it's like something you should sing with an old acoustic guitar, not just read on paper. Life sucks when you're locked up, Amen. We bet most of The Beat readers know this tune.

How People Get Mean

What I think makes a person mean is how they are treated. Also how they were raised up and also how they want to act. That's what makes a person mean.

-Unknown

From The Beat: So are you saying almost the flip side of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."? Like: How you do depends on how others did to you? That's deep, and shows insight on your part.

Moods

When I'm in a bad mood I do realize that I'm not doing so well, because I do something really bad.

I don't really regret what I do, but what gets you in a bad mood is your emotions. Most people don't realize that, your emotions take over you, so to all those who don't realize that their getting mad, stop and think before you do something you're going to regret, well Beat that's it for tonight. I'm off like some panties

-Johnny

From The Beat: It sounds like you've really figured out some ways to handle those bad news, to make sure they don't put you in a bad position. What have you learned, and hey, share some of your best strategies with your many readers in The Beat!

Sorry Mom!

My topic is sorry mom!! Well what's up Beat, this is my second time writing to you. I'm barely getting used to it, so yeah.

So I just want to say that I'm sorry mom. I'm sorry for making you go through so much pain. When I see you cry, I feel like crying but I don't 'cause I'll make you feel worse. I hope you know that you're all I got and I don't want to lose you.

So I just want to say I'm sorry.

-Jr

From The Beat: The reason your mom cries is because of how much she loves you, and how much she wants you to be happy. So when you treat yourself right, you're treating her right too! What would it mean for you to truly treat yourself right?

Mean-minded Young Delinquent

The kind of person I am is the kind you meet everyday. The average mean minded young delinquent. I do what I do 'cause that's who I am and it's what I like.

The life I live makes me feel better. I love to smoke, drink, and kick it in everyday. "All day." Well that's all for now till next time. Late!

-Lil' John

From The Beat: It's all good to like those times, but look where you landed up! In a place where you can't do any of those three things you like? We don't think you're mean-minded, but isn't it kind of self-destructive, because then you end up here, which doesn't make you feel better at all!

My Moods and Behaviors

I have a lot of bad moods. When I get a hour I am in a bad mood and usually end up on "C" program.

When I am yelled at I usually fight and get dipped. When I am looked at wrong I get mad and usually get on "C" program. Yea well these are my moods and behaviors. Till next time peace.

-Lil' John

From The Beat: It sounds like you understand yourself pretty well - is this something you want to change? Or do you plan on staying this way? If you controlled your anger, would your life be better or easier? How? Have you ever tried to control your anger? If so tell us how it worked out for you.

A Little Bit Wiser

The me before I got locked up wasn't too bad of a kid. He did what he was supposed to and listen to his friends and family.

The only thing that was bad with the old me was that I thought I was above the law, doing whatever I want and hurting people.

I did some bad things and thought I could get away with it. I probably would've kept doing unless I got caught. The me now is a little bit wiser with the same more life experience. From the time I've been here I can see how corrupt the juvenile and judicial system is. There's the counselors that can mess with you and take things from you and there ain't shhh you can do about it.

In the judicial system you can get hard time for all those enhancements, weapon enhancement, gang enhancement, conspiracy charges and fitness. I think now more people can get played for stupid stuff then ever.

I guess I'm lucky, because I got locked up for doing something little now, and it probably stopped me from doing something big later.

-Notorious Viet

From The Beat: More and more the system seems like a great big spider, just spinning its web and finding more ways of trapping people. Luckily, you seem to have seen it for what it is - the problem is that once you're in, you have to be squeaky clean, or they'll find a way to take you in again! Are you ready to go clean? We don't just mean square, we mean CUBED. We hope so, because we want to see you out of the system for keeps.



The Life I Live

Married to the game made this boy stay on that paper chase

Constantly dirty livin' my life at a fast rate
Always on a come up 211's why premeditate
Down for whatever feels like I'm stuck in that fast lane
Doin' hella dirt been through some crazy shhh
Now I'm behind the walls 'cause the life I chose to live.

Well Beat, that's all I got time for tonight.
Until we meet again. To all in the Hall, stay up.

-Nok

From The Beat: In US legal history/the rules of marriage are still a mystery/but in cases of abuse or threat to your life/you can walk away from your husband or wife/you know where we're going with this rhyme of course/You and the game need to get a divorce.

Will I Ever...

The dirt under my feet numbs the sound
I keep near my bed when it rains –
this nothingness that proves I'm insane.
Miles I've hitched tonight.
I haven't had good luck.
The traffic's light, but the weather's been
in my favor. The question is:
will I ever get there?

-Faith

From The Beat: That's one of the big questions. Another one is: where am I trying to get – where do I want to go? You're a bright and imaginative person. If you work hard, we'd bet on you getting wherever you decide you want to go. In the meantime, keep those poems coming.

Thanks For The Shoes Mom

One day I was cleaning my shoes and trying to make them look good. A few months passed and they got dirty again. I didn't like those shoes that much, or cleaning them. They were old and wasted.

I asked my mom if we could go to the mall and buy a new pair. So we did. I found some Nike Air Force shoes and they were almost \$95. My mom said they were expensive, but I told her I liked them, so she bought them.

I gave the other shoes to my cousin so he could finish them off. And that's my shoe story.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Hey Daniel – we're glad you were able to get the shoes you wanted. But we do have a question to ask you. Any idea how many hours your mom had to work to pay for those shoes? Or maybe you worked and saved up the money to buy them and your mom just wanted you to realize that \$95 is a lot of money. But then, if you worked for it, you already know that. Let's see – at 8 bucks an hour, you would have to have worked approximately 12 hours to earn the money for those shoes. That's a day and a half of work, by our calculation. But maybe you get 12 bucks an hour. Then you would only have to work a day to earn enough money for those Nikes.

Talking Walls

If the walls in my room could talk, I'd be talking with them, all the time. I'd be talking to the walls because it's boring in my room. They would probably tell me about the people who were in the room before me. I'd also be asking about all the good fights that have happened here.

-Omar

From The Beat: "The good fights"... you mean like the struggle against racism and poverty, the struggle against addiction, the struggle for justice? Are those the kind of "good fights" you mean? Surely, you don't mean a bunch of guys trying to beat each other up. You couldn't mean those kinds of fights, could you?

Cheap Shoes

One day I went to the mall and bought three pairs of shoes, at \$40 a pair. During the next couple of days, I wore all three pair. But soon two pairs ripped open at the sides.

A few days later, while I was in the shower, my mom took the other pair of shoes and put them outside. My dog grabbed that pair and ripped them up, chewed them all over. I was so mad. I asked my mom to buy me some new ones. But ever since then, I've never gone back to the store that sold me those cheap shoes.

-Sonia

From The Beat: You should have returned to that store one more time, with the first two pair of shoes in hand and asked for a refund of your money. Most stores will stand by their merchandise. They want you to return, over and over. And they know you won't, if you don't get good service.

My dog grabbed that pair and ripped them up, chewed them all over. I was so mad.

The Greatest Thing About Me That Nobody Knows

The greatest thing about me that nobody knows is that I see dead people. It was kind of scary the first time I experienced it, but I got used to it.

I asked my mom about it and she said she talks to them and feels them, too. She can't be alone. She speaks with dead people. When she's washing her hair, it always feels as if someone is right over her shoulder. She can feel their breath on her hair. She calls me when that happens.

I see dead people every night when I'm in here. I've seen little girls walking in the courtyard. And I've seen old people walking. I've seen two old people playing chess – right here. And when I'm in my room, I talk to them. I ask them how they died and they tell me. And I tell them just to walk in the light.

-Albert

From The Beat: This is quite amazing Albert. How long have you been able to do this? It doesn't sound like it's scary. Sounds like you have a good time with these folks. If it ever turns scary, please talk with a trustworthy adult about it – OK?

NEW MEXICO

No Remorse

I twist my middle fingers tuck in my thumb. To throw up the dub, got to watch my back on the streets damn it's rough, death around my corner can't you see the look in my eyes, nothin' but darkness surrounding me.

I see no light, I don't want to see my family burying me six feet deep, facing the consequences at work I put on streets, only seventeen that's too young to go, but 'puck' the world I've lost my heart a long time ago, no one gives a damn or lends you a helping hand, wanted to give up but to me that's not a man.

To the haters trying to touch me I show no remorse, you'll never take me alive. I'm making my own course, growing up I had no father figure, guess that's why I chose to put my hands on a trigger.

- Mario

From The Beat: It's a shame you feel no one cares, there are many good people that are willing to help. First you need to take your hands off the trigger and find the light again. Don't push these helping people away, let them in so you can find your heat again.

Bad Choices

I was on drug court for burglary in a weed charge, then I went on the run for six months then I turned myself in. Basically I'm in here for my bad choices, but I take blame even though I was clean for two months. I still came up dirty, but I should've stayed out of trouble in the first place. People say I'm a bad kid, but there is no such thing as bad kids, just kids who make bad choices.

- Young Dogetta

From The Beat: Yes, everyone is given a choice, and now you're old enough to know the difference between the two. It's now up to you to grow up and make the right choice.

I'm making my own course, growing up I had no father figure, guess that's why I chose to put my hands on a trigger.

Cuando Estoy En La Cárcel

Cuando estoy en la cárcel, no me aguito porque Dios está conmigo. Todos los que estan encerrados dicen que están solos, pero hay alguien que está con ellos, el cual es Dios.

También alguien quienes los quieren mucho son tus hermanos y madre. ¡Nunca lo olviden! No se me aguite.

From The Beat: No se aguite amigo, recuerde lo que nos dijo, Dios esta siempre ahí cuando más lo necesitemos. ¡Gracias por tus palabras!

When I'm In Jail

When I'm in jail, I don't get sad because I know God is with me. Everyone in here says that they are alone. It's not like that because there is someone and that is God.

We also have people who love us and they are your parents, and brothers. Never forget that! Don't get sad.

-I Love God, Marin

From The Beat: You too, don't get sad, and just remember what you told us, God will be there always when we need Him. Thanks for your words!

Esto Es Algo Que Nadie Sabe De Mí

Voy a contarles la historia marcale de mi vida, lleno de tristes anectotas que me han marcado para siempre. Son muchas las cosas que me han pasado que lastimosamente me ha tocado vivir.

Durante mis viajes desde México hacia aquí, tube suerte de haber nadado en el Rio Bravo. He visto como agonisan mis compatriotas Hondureños. He visto como se mutilan en el tren hasta como pierden la vida en un instante.

Gracias a Dios yo lo puedo contar porque tambien he estado apunto de morir en ese gran camino que nos motibaba al camino de la superacion. Aunque este aquí, creo que todavía hay esperanzas.

From The Beat: ¡Claro que todavía hay esperanzas! Mientra estes vivo, todo es posible. Podemos observar muchas cosas atraves de esta escritura y podemos ver lo mucho que has sufrido al venir aquí. Sentimos que hayas perdido la oportunidad de superarte en este país. Si te llegan a dar otra oportunidad aquí, piense en lo que ha vivido y lo duro que ha sido venir a este lugar. ¿Cree que esta experiencia le ayude a pensar en como valorar las cosas que son ganadas con tanto efuerzo? ¡Considéralo!

This Is Something Nobody Knows About Me

I'm going to share with you a remarkable story about me that marked my life forever. They're things that I had to live.

During my journey from Mexico to the US, I had the luck of being able to swim through the Rio Bravo. I have seen how my native people (Honduran) die throughout this journey. I've seen how they aboard the train and how they loose their lives in an instant.

I thank God that I'm alive sharing this story because I was very close from loosing my life when I was coming here through those roads that motivated us to the direction of success. Even if I'm here, I still believe that there is hope.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course there is hope! While you're alive, everything is possible. We can observe many things throughout your writing and we have seen how much you've suffered to get here. We are sorry that you lost the opportunity of succeeding in this country. If they give you another chance, think about the things you've gone through just to get here. Do you think this experience will teach you to value the things that are hard to get? Consider This!

Mis Mejores Amigos

Cuando estoy en mi cuartito, me gusta hablar con las paredes cuando me pongo triste. Las paredes son mis tercer mejor amigo. El primer amigo es Dios, despues mi vato y de último son las paredes. ¿Por qué? Pues yo no confío mucho en las rucas porque uno nunca sabe lo que pasa. Prefiero hablar con las paredes y llorar hasta que me duerma hablando.

From The Beat: Tambien nos tienen a nosotros que te estamos escuchando y deseando lo mejor para ti. Si pudieran hablar las paredes y te dijeran que hacer o no hacer, le hicieras caso? Gracias por tu tiempo y que Dios te bendiga!

My Best Friends

When I'm in my room, I like to talk to the walls when I get sad. The walls are my third best friends. The first one on the list is God, then my boyfriend and for last the walls. Why? Well because I don't trust the girls in here, because you never know. I rather talk to the walls until I get tire and fall asleep.

-Negra, San Francisco

From The Beat: You also have us to listen to you whenever you need. We also wish the best for you. If the walls could talk back to you and advice you to do the right thing, would you listen? Thanks for your time and God bless you.

I was coming here through those roads that motivated us to the direction of success. Even if I'm here, I still believe that there is hope.

Lo Que Me Preocupa

En el día de hoy, me preocupa mi familia, mi novia y mi corte. Estoy preocupado porque no sé que va a pasar en mi corte.

Me dicen que me van a dar 25 años y por eso estoy preocupado. Estoy preocupado por mi familia porque temo que nadie los vaya a proteger si me dan ese tiempo. Tengo miedo perder a mi novia, que le hagan dano. Estas cosas las cosas que me preocupan. Ahora le dejo las cosas a Dios porque sé que El no me va a abandonar. ¡Dios ayúdame!

From The Beat: Esperamos que Dios te pueda ayudar. Mantén la fuerza. Pase lo que pase, piensa en como mejorar tu vida y hacer las cosas bien. Si eres culpable de algo malo, arrepientente de tus acciones.

What Worries Me

Today I'm worried about my family, my girl and court. I'm worried because I don't know what will happen.

They are telling me that they want to give me 25 years and that's why I'm worried. I'm worried that there won't be someone to protect my family during that time. I'm worried that someone might hurt my girl. These are the things that worry me. Now I leave everything in God's hand because I know that he won't abandon me. God help me!

-Roylan, Marin

From The Beat: We hope God help you. Keep yourself strong! Whatever happens, try to do things better. And if you are guilty of something bad, repent from your actions.

Who Will Break The Chain

Since your mom did drugs your dad left her
 Since your dad left her you grew up with no father
 Since you grew up with no father you were raised by the streets
 Since you were raised by the streets all you knew was sex and drugs
 Since all you knew was sex and drugs you went to jail
 Since you went to jail you hated the law
 Since you hated the law you hung out with the lawbreakers
 Since you hung out with the lawbreakers your mind was weak
 Since your mind was weak you hooked up with someone with the same mind as you
 Since you both had a weak mind you had nothing to offer your young
 Since you had nothing to offer your young they grew up like you did
 Who will break the chain?

-Angilee

From The Beat: This is a brilliant piece of self-analysis and a totally understandable circle of failures. One thing, though, your mind is far from weak! No one with a weak mind could have conceived this poetic chain you describe. You have the intellectual power to break the chain even if it's all you've known so far. We urge you to finish school and get yourself into college (what you've written is college quality) where doors in your mind you never imagined existed will open up for you. As you walk through those doors, a new world will be revealed, and in that new world you will find new ways of thinking and of doing, creating new chains of strength and righteousness. Don't sell yourself short. The world needs people who can think and write as clearly as you.

Tha' Monster

Beauty and the beast
 Not a fairy tale in the least
 With everything in its place
 Beauty is the monster's face
 Full of toxic waste
 Yet walks with grace
 A beautiful girl full of rage
 They lock the beast in a cage
 Beauty and the beast
 Her pain written on these paper sheets
 They say she's a monster
 A danger to the world
 But society made this monster
 Molesting this little girl
 Beauty and the beast
 A tragedy to say the least
 Hopefully her pain will one day
 Be released. . .

-Friskie

From The Beat: You know, Friskie, we're all part beauty and part beast. You are as capable of greatness as of failure, just as we all are. You are no danger to the world, but maybe a danger to yourself because you've become dependent on things outside yourself for validation and support (whether that's a boyfriend or a drug). But you have great strength and a fine mind, so look inside for the support you need. Pain is part of life, but so is joy and happiness. Get the help you need for the addictions that sometimes take over your thinking, and start climbing out of the hole that you've dug. Read what you've written (here and elsewhere) and recognize what gifts you've been given. Use them!

Almost Dead

A painful blow
 An alarming voice
 Unable to move
 I had no choice
 Drowning in my surroundings
 Being consumed by what felt like death
 I was certain at this moment
 I was taking my last breath
 Trying to depend on what little hope I had
 Only to find there was none left
 I knew fairly soon
 They'd be laying me to rest
 I could no longer bear the pain
 Of the pounding in my chest
 I was almost dead from
 Crystal Meth. . .

-Friskie

From The Beat: It's that "little hope" you had (and have) that kept you from dying, and it is that "little hope" that you have to feed, not with meth, not with food, not with sex, but with self-awareness. Cut yourself a break, Friskie. You are alive. That is no small accomplishment. Your life means something. Find that meaning.

*Beauty is the monster's face
 Full of toxic waste
 Yet walks with grace
 A beautiful girl full of rage
 They lock the beast in a cage*

Prisoner

A childhood thrown away
 Locked up in the system
 Juvy to YA
 So many tears come to pass
 Now to cover the pain
 All I can do is smile and laugh
 Act as tho' life is so serene
 So as not to cry over my broken dreams
 Cuffed, shackled and chained
 Even on the sunniest of days
 My world rains
 Beliefs all abandoned
 Is scream but no one hears
 What have I become
 A prisoner to tears

-Friskie

From The Beat: Your childhood was taken/By circumstances not of your makin'/We can understand why you're so tired/As well as why tears are sometimes required/But if you're a prisoner, it's not to your tears/You're a prisoner to your addictions and to your fears/Those things that trapped you as a child/Made you a little reckless, a little wild/But as it says in 1 Corinthians 13:11/(And we're talking life on earth, not in heaven;/We know it's hard, but still it's true)/It's time to put childish things behind you.

*All I can do is smile and laugh
 Act as tho' life is so serene
 So as not to cry over
 my broken dreams*

Truth

Upon release, will I become deceased
 How soon will it be before I die in the streets
 Or be buried alive six feet deep
 Because of that late night creep
 Got nowhere to go and are starving to eat
 Tired of fearing that eternal sleep
 Tired of death and having to weep
 The old me would be quick to get right back in
 But now it's not about getting paid
 It's about facing what makes me afraid
 It's about learning who I am and validating my opinions
 Growing up facing life, making good decisions

-Friskie

From The Beat: We're not sure we could have said any better than you have said it here. Yes, it's about learning who you are and facing your fears. Of course that's scary (that's why they call them "fears"), but unless you examine the wounds you cannot cure them. We know from your writing (which has always been better than good) that you are growing up, and that may be one of the fears you need to face. Adulthood brings with it great opportunities, but also great responsibilities. We know you are up to meeting these responsibilities. You've learned the hard way that knowledge (of right and wrong, for example) is not enough to prevent bad things from happening. That requires something else: courage, self-discipline, self-respect and the determination to do what you know you can do. You've got it in you to do. Now do it!

*It's about facing what
 makes me afraid
 It's about learning who I
 am and validating
 my opinions
 Growing up facing life,
 making good decisions*

Peace In Life

Love, that's what this all comes down to. No, not just love. I'm talking about the cycle of life. I'm talking about finding that somebody and deciding to marry her and stay with her forever, no matter whether you even like each other or not a few years down the road. And why will you do this? So that you can make babies together, and try to keep them alive and teach them what they need to know so that someday they'll have babies, and keep the whole thing going.

And you'll never draw a secure breath until you have grandchildren, a double handful of them, because then you'll know that your line won't die out. Your influence will continue. Selfish, isn't it? Only it's not selfish. It's what life is for. It's the only thing that brings happiness, ever, to anyone.

All the other things — victories, achievements, honor — they bring only momentary flashes of pleasure. But binding yourself to another and to the children you make together, that's life. And you can't do it if your life is centered on your ambitions. You'll never be happy. It will never be enough even if you rule the world.

-Mcgee

From The Beat: This is something you've obviously thought about because you've expressed it beautifully here, whether we agree with your conclusion or not. Since you clearly have a first-class mind, can we ask you whether you think adopting children would satisfy this need to "keep the whole thing going"? And as long as we're commenting on your mind, how is it that you allowed yourself to have your freedom taken away?

All the other things — victories, achievements, honor — they bring only momentary flashes of pleasure. But binding yourself to another and to the children you make together, that's life.

Life Is Complicated

Life is complicated
 I'm locked up but da world is still going
 Everything gets worse before it gets better
 I'm stressed in jail
 Dat's da worse part
 As I see other people living a fairy tale
 I feel I'm living in da worse part of hell
 I rise above lil' by lil'
 But I always seem to fall
 As I'm sitting in da hall
 Bad news keeps catching my attention
 When I'm happy feeling on top of da world
 I soon get a letter
 And I find out wicked panned
 My baby cousin I so dearly love
 She says she's following my footsteps
 Dat hurts me very deeply
 I'm faced with so much tragic
 I'm looking outside my window
 And I can't see nothing but the moon
 What can I do
 How can I change her ways
 Damn, I know I can't
 Brother keeps getting locked up
 Sister suicidal in the hospital
 Nephew needs a home
 Cousin on the run
 And I'm all alone in dis' room
 Just thinking all dis' in my mind
 People say it will be fine.

-Giggles

From The Beat: You know, Giggles, nobody lives a fairytale except in the movies. It may seem that way from the outside, but everyone struggles. It is the nature of life. The trick is to find some kind of balance between the difficult realities of your life and the wonderful realities of being alive. You say you can't see anything but the moon, but just think about that sentence for a minute, and imagine all those who never see the moon — either because they're blind, because they don't bother to look, because they're not interested, or because they can't. The truth about all those you care so deeply about is that you can do nothing for them until you do for yourself! If you allow their bad situations to keep you from doing what you need to do to work on yourself, then it's like a guarantee that nobody will move beyond these hardships. Is it hard? Of course it is. But is it permanent? That's up to you.

If He Only Knew

Tired of you puttin' hands on me
 And you thinkin' dat I'm your property
 Boy, you must be trippin'
 Watch yo' back, 'cause I'ma catch you slippin'
 Tired of you thinkin' that you hella sick,
 Only if females knew what you was rollin' wit'. . .Ha Ha
 But dat ain't it,
 You did me dirty!
 It's coo' though,
 There's still a lot you don't know.
 If you only knew
 Da stuff I've done to you.
 You lied
 You mistreated
 But you ain't da only one who cheated
 Boy, I played you like a game
 Shut up.
 Just listen,
 I'm not playin'
 Now back to what I was sayin'
 You should have known
 I could never be alone.
 I used you for what you got
 I'm sorry to say
 But it ain't a lot!
 I used you
 Not only for your money 'cause I got mine
 But just to annoy you and waste your time!
 Boy I had you in da palm of my hand
 Now its just time for me to look for a better man.
 You were just a little boy I had to get rid of real quick.
 Plus, like I said, you don't even have the right equipment
 You really shouldn't have so much pride
 'cause I'm the one who put you on this side
 Now that I said what I had to say
 You could go ahead and go cry
 'cause this just ain't just one of our little break ups. . .
 This is goodbye!

-Binker

From The Beat: We are very impressed with your skills as a poet, but less impressed with your skills as a good person! Whatever he did to you, why waste so much time and energy focused on getting him back? If he did you dirt, tell your other friends to avoid him and move on. Anyone who can put a poem together as graphic and specific as you have does not need to be so consumed with revenge. Get over him and move on! (And give us the benefit of your fine talents to teach us something.)

The Right Path

I was almost off probation and I was doing good. The lesson I learned is don't get caught with what everybody else is doing, which I didn't. But a simple mistake or accident can cause you start probation all over, which I have to do. It's not hard, but you have to stay on one path to accomplish your goals. My goal is to get off probation. So my lesson to you is stay on the right path so you can achieve your aim.

-Sybreera

From The Beat: We're not sure we understand exactly what you mean. It sounds like a bunch of your friends did something they shouldn't have done, but that you weren't caught for that, but for something else? It really doesn't matter, 'cause your lesson and advice is right on the money: stay on the right path!

Locked Up And Pregnant

Otra vez aqui sin ti (Here again without you)
 I'm hella stressin'
 'cause this time it's different
 It ain't just me
 I got someone inside of me
 And den I realize I need to
 Stop messin' around and being crazy
 I'm about to be a mom
 I got four months until my eighteenth birthday
 And then I'm off probation
 Hopefully everything turns out right so
 We can be together again soon as a family
 Da way it's supposed to be
 Me and you, you and me
 Driftin' on a memory
 Time goes by. . .
 And we'll be together again soon
 And dis time por vida (forever)

-Loka

From The Beat: It hurts to think of you trying to focus on your pregnancy while needing to focus on your case and your situation. Yes, this time it's different — time to make some major changes in your life as you assume responsibility for another's life. Besides getting out and back to your baby's daddy, what is your plan for change? If you don't have one, someone else will have one for you. Good luck!

Sorry Mom

I'm sorry mom
 Dad left, it wasn't your fault
 You beat yourself up for it
 And was always gone
 Trying to find a way to support us
 Ran to drugs, other guys
 Left me by myself
 I wish I had both parents
 But not all wishes come true
 I ended up going outside by myself
 Guided myself
 But the wrong way
 Now that I'm older almost to the edge
 I get pulled back
 Now I'm in jail
 Mom's stressing
 Going through hurt and sadness
 More bills to pay
 I should have listened
 I'm sorry I didn't
 I'm used to the streets
 But I don't blame you
 I'm happy that you have my back
 But I'm sorry for letting you down
 I always told you "I know mom"
 But I really didn't
 Now Im'a listen to everything you say
 'cause you been there and done it
 And you know
 So I'm sorry mom, I love you

-CeCe

From The Beat: Of course you were not able to guide yourself, because you had no experience or knowledge to do it. You were a child. It is the responsibility of parents to guide their children exactly because children cannot parent themselves. But through this sad process, you've learned a few things which should help you become the responsible adult you didn't have guiding you. Build on what you have learned so that you don't make the mistakes your parents made, and keep moving forward.

On My Mind

I don't feel anything in my head. After all the drugs I've done, I feel like I'm dead. I used to know what to do, but all I feel is frustration and pain from every single thing I do. Mom's crying tears from the heart for me to depart this place I now call home.

-Bianca

From The Beat: No, this isn't home! This is a station along the way. Not a nice place. Not a place where you want to be. Not a place where you should be. But also not a permanent reality! Part of what you're feeling is not the result of drugs, but the result of the confusion that all adolescents feel as they make that all-important transition from childhood to adulthood. What you're feeling today is just a snapshot, but your life is a moving picture. Don't give up!

You Promised

You promised you'd be here for me forever and ever
 We told each other dat no matter what happen we'll be together.
 You lied and cried I can't even explain how many times I tried.
 While I'm over here trying to figure out mistakes
 You over there takin' other females on dates.
 Boy, you don't realize how much you hurt me
 I thought this was the kind of love that would last for eternity.
 The breezie is just a rebound.
 I'm da one you can't be without,
 I'm da one who's here for you when you need someone to talk to,
 I'm da one who loves you!
 But you lied,
 You cheated,
 You were givin' her what I want.
 Baby, why couldn't you just be faithful,
 I ain't askin' you for a lot.
 What did she have over me to make you break my heart?
 What did she have that I didn't to make our love fall apart?
 Baby, I gave you so many chances,
 That I should have let you go years ago
 Regardless of the circumstances.
 I'm still here and it's hard for me to let you go!

-Binker

From The Beat: It may be hard for you to let him go, but we can tell it will be even harder for you if you try to hold on to him. And why would you want to? From our experience (of many more years than you have lived), you will find another man more worthy of you, and the pain you're feeling now will become only a memory. You have talents, Binker, so focus on your own situation and the things that caused you to love your freedom (which, to our minds, is even worse than losing your boyfriend), and use those talents to get beyond this setback. He's not worth more of your time.

Resisting Anger

The thing that I will have to resist most to stay out of jail is my temper. I get angry very easily. Most of the time I can control my anger though. But once in a while I can let my anger get the best of me, and I'll do something stupid. That's the reason I'm here.

In order to avoid letting my anger get the best of me, I'll just have to remember that my temper put me in Juvenile Hall. Knowing that if I lose my temper again, I might come back here will keep me from letting out my anger again.

-James

From The Beat: You've hit on something that's important in everything you do or will ever do: If you are willing to accept the consequences of your behavior, do it. If you're not, don't!

The Highest Temptation In The Street

One of the highest temptations in the streets for me is to not fight. Staying out of fights is hard to do for me because I hate when people challenge me in a fight, especially when they suck. That makes me want to slap them up. But I try sometimes not to fight because I know I'll get caught in that area or place and get in trouble, like school or places in the streets where cops roll through a lot. I try to pick places where I can fight and where I can't really get into trouble if I really want to fight the guy or he really wants to fight me.

-Ethan

From The Beat: Do you think it takes more courage to fight or to walk away from a fight? Have you ever tried?

The Monster In My Life

The monster in my life is drugs. Drugs are all throughout my family, especially with my dad. My dad is the monster in my life because he's on drugs, and when he's on one, he be acting crazy. My dad used to be cool and was always there until he started doing drugs. When he started using, he was never around no more and was always spending all his time with his girlfriend and just leaving me at home with Pops (grandpa).

My grandpa is basically my dad now because he is always there now no matter what. Now my dad is in and out of jail and still ain't there for me. So I guess all I have is Pops. Well, this all took a lot of understanding and also showed me not to be involved in drugs because it's ruining people's lives. Especially if you have children.

-T-Y

From The Beat: It's tragic that drug addiction is treated as a crime instead of a medical condition. You dad needs help, but instead of getting help, he gets punished. And in turn, you get punished. In some ways, our entire society (and government) is also addicted — to punishment. But at least you have the good sense not to follow in your dad's footsteps.

Ma Boyfriend

(Dedicated To Goofy)

As my days pass by
I start to realize
Dat I'm in da need of dis guy
His kisses drive me crazy
His touch drives me insane
Why is it dat I feel dis way?
I can't explain
Ma mind is half way blank
I'm stuck
In a world full of pain. . .
I would love to 'scape
Go to him
And make sure
Dat what I feel
Ain't no mistake. . .
As my days pass by
I start to realize
Dat I'm in need of dis guy
Foolish games have been played
How I wish
I could replay
Every day and every night
I spent with dis guy. . .
Too bad I'm in da need
of a soul dat can't no longer
be told. . .
As my days pass by
I start to realize
Dat I'm in da need of dis guy

-Brownie

From The Beat: We recognize the feelings you describe here, Brownie — part love, part lust, part hormone rush. But that doesn't mean you really NEED what you are daydreaming about. We're sorry that you are separated from this man of your dreams, but you made certain choices that led to this separation. We hope you spend as much time thinking about those choices and what you NEED to avoid making them in the future as you spend on fantasizing about the boy left behind...

My Secret Addiction

Food is my comfort
Food is my strength
Food is what I focus on in here—
When I'm too overwhelmed to think.
Food relieves my stress
And helps me feel my best
Even after gaining pound after pound
The misery and pain is still profound
I eat to alleviate the hurt that I feel
I wish this life wasn't even real
Food is an addiction
Just another of many
But six trays later
The pain is still there, even after eating plenty. . .
I hate feeling hungry
In my heart and in my soul
I'm growing bitter and cold
165 pounds, only almost 18 years old.
Biscuits and gravy, black-eyed peas and steak
I love all types of food
Especially goodies you make in easy bake
When it comes to self-medicating
Call me a pro
Addiction is what I best know
When drugs are not available
I turn to food for salvation
All you can eat is my satisfaction
To me, eating is an outlet
Where I can let myself be free
Food is an addiction that's taken control of me.

-Friskie

From The Beat: Yes, you're a pro at self-medicating, but (as you know better than anyone), the medicines you've chosen only add to the disease! We know the comfort that food can provide in a cold world, Friskie, but it's a false comfort, just another dependency. We hope you are talking to adults that you can trust (Psychologists? Teachers? Counselors? Friend?) to help you find the hurt little girl inside of you and embrace her, pain and all, so that you don't need to find ways to numb her existence. You have so much going for you that you don't seem to see in yourself. Stop trying to rely solely on yourself alone, as your methods have failed you over and over. Loving food can make you feel better, but it is no substitute for loving yourself.

I Wanna Get Out

I'm sittin' in dis room
I don't know what to do
I wanna go home but
I got eight months at camp
I'm missin' my mom
I'm sorry for what I did
But I can't go back
I know I shouldn't have smoked
Dat blunt and never run away
But what can I do but sit in dis room
Feelin' da pain going through my head
Every time I look through my window
All I can see is fences and gates
I just wish I could escape
But I just have to do my time
And get the hell out

-Rosa

From The Beat: We're not sure if you're here for smoking a blunt or for something else that happened, but we want to encourage you to think about a real plan for your future. It isn't enough to do your time and get out because you've been out before but didn't stay out. Use your time to think about your future, to plan for it, to decide exactly what you're going to do when you walk out the door in order never to walk back in! (That means going to school at the very least. What else does it mean?)

Bad Morning

I woke up hung over in one of my friend's bed. My head hurt and I felt really sick. I couldn't remember much from the night before or why I was in my friend's bed. I walked into the bathroom and puked. Then I went out into the hall and there was a lot of newspaper on the floor. My friends had put it down because I had puked all over the floor.

I got hungry and stumbled down the street to get something at Wendy's. I had a burger, then called my mom and asked for a ride home. I felt really sick on the ride home and threw up out the window. I got some in the car so I had to clean it up. Then I went to sleep.

-James

From The Beat: This would be enough to keep us sober for a very, very long time. Will it have that effect on you? (By the way, we'd prefer if you chose just one topic to write about. Even though you did a good job of writing about all three topics, we know you could have given us much more by way of details and examples if you had focused on just one.)

Life

What do we have to lose? I ask myself this all the time. But what I have come to realize is that in life you have a lot to lose. My life is messed up like others as well. But when you really think about it, many don't really care.

Life is a hard thing to deal with at times. People talk mess and you think that by doing things to that person it will stop the hurt, what you are feeling. But it doesn't. It sometimes adds to it.

When someone loses their life, what do you think happens to their soul? No one knows. But if we did, maybe we would be able to see how their life went.

-Stewi-F-Baby

From The Beat: We think you're on to some things in this piece, Stewi. If hurting others who have hurt you doesn't stop the pain, why do you think we do it? What do you think happens to us when we die?

Temptations

Mane, the main temptations that yo' boy gone have is going back to da block, feel me? I mean, I'm true to da game. I am in da streets all day and its going to be hard to stay away from dat fast money, mane. But sometime you have to get it how you live. I might have to get back to da block to go to my street dreams. I am still gone get it how I live.

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: And just what do you think you're going to get how you live? You've already come close to death, but is that the only alternative? Are you willing to spend a significant number of years in prison? Are you willing to spend the rest of your life in a wheelchair? (What if that bullet had severed your spine?) Nobody who is living those realities ever thought it could happen to them...

Lock-Down

Mane, right now we locked down, but really when we on da streets we locked down because everybody gots labels on you. So you can't even go where you want. I am locked down, fa' sho', but I don't let it get to me, feel me? That's when you act out the way they want ya' to. I was brought up in da streets, so I am stickin' wit da streets, feel me?

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: You can choose to stick with the streets, but not because you were brought up there. Many people who were brought up in a certain way or in a certain place as children make the adult decision to change, to move beyond their upbringing. Children have to accept the cards they've been dealt. Adults get to choose which deck they play with...

Crack

I been around crack all my life, feel me? And I really can't continue to be around that lifestyle because it's takin' a toll on me. It's starting to come into my family and, feel me, dat ain't even coo', feel me mane? I can't even lie, it's hard to look into the eyes of a smoker and just let him have it smoked, but I still have to get it how we live, feel me?

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: When you tell us that you can't continue to be around a certain lifestyle that you've known all your life, you're also telling us that you don't have to accept what's gone before. If you can make this change, why not others?

My Temptation

Kicking it with the homies
Living the life and trying to stay out
That's what my life's about
Trying to do good
But I gotta slang to get food
That's my temptation

-Macias

From The Beat: Do you mean that unless the county feeds you, as they're doing now, you have no choice but to sell drugs? Have you examined all the alternatives? Are you being entirely honest?

Life Stands Still

When life stands still, what will you do? Think of things true or false. Think of things you cannot see or be. When life stands still what will happen? Will you think of the life you lead from now till then or will you think of what is within. If life would stand still what would you do?

-Stewi-F-Baby

From The Beat: This is creative and a challenging question, but we really aren't sure what you're asking. How does life stand still? In a way, it's standing still for you right (even though it's not standing still for those on the outs). So, what will you do?

Monster

I don't think I have a "monster" in my life. I get angry easily, but I don't normally act on it. So anger isn't a big problem for me. I don't like to let things get in my way. If something does get in my way, I do my best to overcome it, or make the best of it.

-James

From The Beat: It's an admirable quality to try to overcome obstacles by thinking about them and not reacting to them. But you've already told us that you are here because your anger got the better of you, so even if you don't "normally" act on your emotions, you need to work on those times when you do.

Missin' My Man

I'm sittin' in dis room thinkin' 'bout ma man
Hopin' I'll be out soon, I can't wait to have you in ma arms again

I wanna kiss you, hug you, see you
Damn baby, I remember when I first met you
I was hella happy

But now I'm in here looking hella nappy
I love yo so much I'm feeling for yo' touch
Missing pretty eyes and smiles dat make me go wild
I remember when you told me, "I love you"

For da first time, I was hella happy
But the days went by and I did my crime

Now I'm in here doing my time
Missin' your kisses that tasted like wine
But damn baby, what can I do

But dese romantic lines?

-Rosa

From The Beat: You weren't thinking of him, were you, when you let the system take you away. Next time you're tempted to do whatever it is that hands your freedom away to strangers (and there will be a next time), think clearly about what you love more, your man or your crimes...

My Turf/My Block/My 'Hood

My turf is where I know no hurt,
Where I know that I have to put in work,
Where me and my boys have fun doing dirt,
My block, that's much, much worse
People sometimes leave in a black hearse.
My 'hood, that's what I know
Where I can just let go
And not care and let things show
Because that's the way things go.

-Stewi-F-Baby

From The Beat: But isn't the result of that way of life on your block, just letting thing go, often something you don't want, like lock-up? You and your boys may have fun putting in work, but are you having fun now? Isn't this a part of the life you've chosen?

In And Out

I'm sittin' in dis cold room
I don't got nothing to do
But read, sleep and eat
Every time I see through my window
All I see is fences and gates
I wish I could escape
I'm tired of dis place
I'm tired of comin' in and out
I been here six times
I'm tired of doing time
I just wanna get out
And never come back
But it seems so hard 'cause the streets
Keeps on pullin' me back
I wanna change my ways
And be the girl I was months ago
But it's just hard to put up with the POs
I'm tired of the stupid system
Judges and staff are so used to me
Dat when I leave
They know I'll be back in a month
I'm tired of seeing my mom cry
But dis time when I get out I won't be back
Just because I'm tired of comin' in and out.

-Rosa

From The Beat: When you're tired enough, you really won't come back. Since you know what brings you here, you also know what you have to stop doing in order to stay free (and keep your mother happy). You say it's hard to change because the streets pull you, but we can tell from what you've written that it's also hard to be here. So, you're making a choice between hard things. Which is harder, staying out of the streets or staying in the hall? You choose.

Good-bye

Today is my last day. I hope I never come back to Hillcrest. I came in here for a dumb reason in the first place. I really enjoyed writing The Beat Within. This will be my last time writing The Beat. You guys will see me on TV in the future.

-Reese

From The Beat: We hope when we see you on TV it's because you're graduating from college, receiving and award or starring in a movie. By the way, you can always write for The Beat wherever you are and whatever you are doing. If you do write for us (our address is on the topic sheets), we will publish your writing in the back of the Big Beat — the one Hillcrest officials do not allow you to see — and we will send it to you.

Growing Stronger

You told me to hold on if I ever feel like letting go.

Then you let us fall apart and left us all alone.

Is it lonely out there in this great, wide world?

Do you think about my brother or me, ya lil' girl?

Yeah, I know we weren't perfect, but why did you have to leave?

I grew up without a mother, someone to teach me the dangers of love and hate.

I wish you were here to witness my achievements and defeats.

At least in da crowd so you could shed some tears of sorrow or joy for me.

But it's alright. I'm making it through.

I'm growing into a strong person and I'm doing it without you.

-Kayos

From The Beat: Why did your mother leave? How old were you? It's hard to imagine life without that closest of human bonds, child to mother, so we admire you for having not just survived it, but for growing stronger despite it. As difficult as your lack of a mother must be, the real loss is hers not to be able to see the strong young person you have become and will continue to be.

Court Day

Today is da day of my court

Wonderin' what they said in my report

Thinkin' 'bout if it's good or bad

Prayin' I can go home

Not sit in da cell alone

'Bout to talk to my attorney

See what he got to say

See if I have to stay

Hope not and I pray

That I get released today

She told me some good things

Now its up to da judge to make it

Shine and bling

I got camp

For eight months

Don't get to sit in da hall wit' dem freaks

Camp for eight months

Now it's time for me to change ma ways

If I make one mistake

They might send me outta state

Then it's gone be too little too late

-Rosa

From The Beat: You're so right, Rosa. It's getting late to make the changes you know you need to make. Don't wait. Don't be one of those sad people who spend years thinking, "If only..."

Fallen Soldier

He was taken by the hand of God. We didn't see it coming. He always said he would never leave me, but when he lost his life I started to cry. He was there by my side. Do or die, he kept saying he was all right but the sickness still took his life. They took him from me and I didn't even get to say goodbye. He was more than a friend in my life.

It was my uncle that the sickness of cancer took from me. When he was taken in his sleep, I was so upset that I couldn't eat or sleep. So all I have now is memories to that great man. I would like to say rest in peace. Fallen soldier, you may be gone now but you will never be forgotten in my eyes.

You will always be that soldier in my life that will never sleep, watching over me as my life goes on. I know you're there and I will always stand strong. Fallen soldier, you're still here in my heart. I will have no fear.

Dedicated to that fallen soldier in my life,

Uncle Pedro RIP, you will never be forgotten

-Stewi-F-Baby

From The Beat: This sad tribute to the man who meant so much to you reminds us that death awaits all of us sooner or later — and that later is better than sooner. We know that your uncle Pedro understood just how much you loved him, and that comforted him in his last days. In many ways, he lives still inside you, as this wonderful piece makes clear. You have our sympathy for your loss.

Live Until I Die

Right now I am just living until I die, feel me? That's what it is. I am just ridin' out a chapter in my book of life. I been running da streets for a while. Now I got nothing to show for it but, Man, mostly I got wounds from fights and emotional wounds too.

Right now I am just tryin' to "get rich or die tryin'." Man, dat's on da real, feel me? I been through some rough times but you have to pull through them. Man that's how you get to points that you was not even thinkin' 'bout, feel me? Just live ya' life to the fullest 'cause when its gone, it ain't comin' back. Live until you die.

-Mr. Kabb

From The Beat: We all live until we die, Mr. Kabb. That's the very definition of life. But what do you mean by that? Is there anything you would not do to get your money? If getting rich is the only goal, then what limits do you place on yourself, if any? And tell us, what do you think riches will bring you? How will your life change, except in material things? How will those riches address the wounds you've caused yourself and others have caused you? Did that bullet that almost penetrated your brain know (or care) if you were rich or poor?

My Highest Temptation

My highest temptation when I get out is to stay out the streets, kicking it with the homies and stealing. But the most thing that keeps bringing me back to the hall is stealing. But I'm going not to try to steal no more, cars or anything else when I get out.

-Stealer

From The Beat: What do you mean you're going "not to try to steal no more"? Trying doesn't really make sense in this situation. Don't steal, or be willing to accept the consequences (like these) if you do. (We can't use your last name in The Beat, so please give us a nickname or your first name. We had to make a name up for you...)

Street Monster

When tha streets is cold and you can't run

You lookin' fo' a friend but you feel like you ain't got one

Yo' boys puttin' in work but you wanna be done

You want out but you know it will cost ya yo' boys

The streets, death is the monster

Street monster

-Buchanan

From The Beat: There are costs for staying with the streets, just as there are costs for walking away. As you mature, you're beginning to weigh those costs. The real danger is that if you wait too long, the costs become more than you can pay. Think about it.

Fallen Soldiers

Now that you gone, I think about the goodies we did. When you were a veterano, Homes and I was a kid. I used to keep my mouth shut an' observe the gang, respecting on my elders because they earned their names.

I'm writing you this letter to let you know we're together. My body is sorrow. We miss you. Back in the days, we couldn't kick it. We were either locked up or out with the homies. But fo' sho', we some ridas. I hope we can kick it one more time by the tracks. So every fallen soldier lookin' up from above, this is how we show love. Rest in peace homies.

-Rambo

From The Beat: We're sorry for you loss, Rambo, even as we recognize that loss is an inevitable part of the game you've chosen to play. To us, the real tragedy is that someone as smart as you is so willing to accept the greatest loss of all (next to life itself), and that's freedom. As this piece makes clear, some choices come with regrets that can never be undone.

Streets Keep Callin'

My mom prays that I quit the life I live. I try to change my ways but the streets still keep callin' me. I love her to death, but at the same time I'm a soldier. I gots to put in work until survivors get older. I'm a G, but what can I do? The streets are callin' me. I'm too deep in this game. I pray that I could change. Hope my mom can forgive me but the streets keep callin' me.

-Rambo

From The Beat: It sounds to us as if you're in a life-or-death struggle with yourself, Rambo. What does it mean to pray to change? How can you both pray to change and accept that you have to "put in work"? We have known many, many (much older) people who have been far deeper into the game than you are now, but who have suddenly seen a different way of looking at the world, and have extricated themselves from the gangs they once served. We say that only to tell you we know it's possible, even if you don't believe it is. When we look at you, we see a unique individual who is far more valuable than any group, gang, street, city or country. We wish you saw yourself in the same light!

When I Die

When I die tell the stars,
How much I loved you,
And tell the moon,
All the things that we used to do

When I die tell the sky
How much I cared
And tell the sun
Who hugged you when you were scared

When I die tell the wind
How happy we used to be
Tell a rose and tell a bee
That your heart still belongs to me

When I die tell the sea,
That you're the one that I will miss
Tell the sand and tell the breeze
Tell a pet and tell the trees

But never tell a human
Because they will not agree
They will laugh and tell you
That you were living a fantasy

We used to have this next incredible poet in our workshops in San Francisco County's Juvenile Hall, but now he's out and free, so he decided to drop us a few lines. It always brightens our day to hear from someone we met while locked up when they've finally gotten out because understandably most people don't keep in contact once they've been freed. He hits us with two poems this week. The first, "Life, The So Called Test," is about his life and where he thinks it will lead if he decides to keep living that lifestyle. Then he closes with a very sweet poem to his girl that's titled "When I Die." We think she would probably rather have him alive, but in the event that he does pass, he's giving her something that'll last forever — a documentation of his feelings. We thank him for keeping in touch and hopefully we'll hear from him again real soon.

Life, The So Called Test

As I walk down the valley of the shadow of death
I see myself lying in a coffin under a peaceful rest
Not knowing why I am imagining this
While wondering if there is something I missed
I think back to how I lived my life
And remembering all the tears I've sacrificed
I cared a lot for my family and friends
Thinking they would be there 'til the very end
Having no doubt of dying someday
Why do I go through nothing but bad times?
And committing all these crimes
A life full of sadness and despair
Just sittin' there smelling hash in the air
Mi vida loca (my crazy life) and no one to tell

As The Sun Rose

As the sun rose this morning, I said a quiet prayer,
I asked for this new day to be better than yesterday.
I made some coffee, got dressed, put a CD on.
My mind slowly drifted, thinking of home.
I try not to get distracted cause home is far away,
Until I'm there, all I ask is for one more day.
Cause inside my current world, I remain prepared,
Everyone is for themselves, they don't care.
As I look around, this place is dark and dull,
We wear the same clothes, some have tattoos of skulls.
You could feel the tension carried around by most,
These halls I walk, are occupied by ghosts.
Since I've been here, people pass at a fast rate,
For not being able to leave outside these gates.
I'm the first to admit you're not free on the inside,
My freedom is all I had, when the lights go out, I cry.
I could have never imagined a place like this... it's hell,
Be careful who I trust, in their eyes, hate dwells.
So alone I must be at all times to be safe,
It's easy to become lost or catch a new case.
They like to say the struggle exists only in the mind,
But right now the struggle exists while I'm doing this time.
And once I'm free to just be me,
I will be that man that this life wants me to be.

*I could have never imagined a place like
this... it's hell,
Be careful who I trust,
in their eyes, hate dwells.*

GREGORY VANCE

If you want to read a great poem about what it means to be in jail and another one to a mother of a child who isn't writing the father who's incarcerated, then you should definitely read this next writer. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, and as he writes he puts the reader in a place of compassion for his situation even though we're also aware that he may have done some things to put himself in that situation. However, we don't know the latter and it really doesn't matter anyway because his writing is raw and genuine. You can definitely tell he's speaking from the heart.

Unopened Letters

Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday... I've sent letters, Expressing my love in hopes that things will get better

I know things are tough, cost of living is up,
A lot of the time you sacrifice so there could be enough.
The kids continue to grow inside my pictures you send,
I feel so bad for not being there to help pay bills and rent.

Here I am, in prison, expecting for you to stop and help me,
Putting extra burdens that you definitely don't need.
Our love as been strong, sometimes crazy I can admit,
I've done you wrong in the past, as you wonder could I commit.

All I could do now is write to convince you how I'm feeling,
Hoping that they reach you safely if the lords willing.
It's been 6 months, no hi's, we're okay, no bye's, nothing,

Are you just busy, or did I say something.
I feel I've finally lost you cause your heart's still broken,
My name was called for mail but my letters were returned.
Unopened.

*A comfort zone when you're alone
 No other man will find
 They taste the fruits of paradise
 But fail to feed your mind*

The holidays are near and love is in the air. This next writer, who's writing from New Folsom in Represa, CA, sends us three poems, all of which are to a particular woman we're assuming. It's sad for us to read such sweet poems because it reminds us of how lonely it must be in jail. The purpose of jail is to isolate us from the rest of the world and we're well aware of that. But when you think about it like that, it just seems so surface. On a deeper level, there are many affects of being isolated that reveal themselves when we read things like this. Hopefully, she's also getting these poems from him in the mail because he did write some really sweet things. Read on and find out for yourself...

The Kiss

Thank you for the kiss
 Intoxicated like fine wine
 Though 9 to 10 months have past
 The visit is forever on my mind
 To hold you, love you, and laugh
 Will forever stay "vivid" to me
 Unspoken emotions match wit' actions
 Now tell me (Miracle), can you feel me?

You said that you were ready
 And you'd forever be down
 Ever since "the kiss"
 You lie with fake promises you let me down
 I'm so raw and real
 A true thug ninja at heart
 Strong and brave, though I'm human
 You got me broken in parts

I ain't mad at you, still love you and care
 But I refuse to bicker
 Peep the message in this poem
 It's all 'bout "the kiss"
 When the flame flicker!

Tonight

Tonight I search the skies
 In hopes to find a star
 A promise made from far away
 To locate where you are
 A comfort zone when you're alone
 No other man will find
 They taste the fruits of paradise
 But fail to feed your mind
 Tonight I search the skies to find
 My agony won't hide
 Within my deepest thoughts I "cry"
 These tears of lonely times
 What will become of us?
 I wonder to the moon
 Will I be blessed at last possess
 The pleasure found wit' you?
 Unique and rare so hard to find
 Someone to trust for life

For play is a must for us, plus I'll love you right
 Don't blush from these words of truth
 Ask yourself "is he for real?"
 Free to search my soul and heart, now tell me if you feel me?

Holla If You Feel Me?

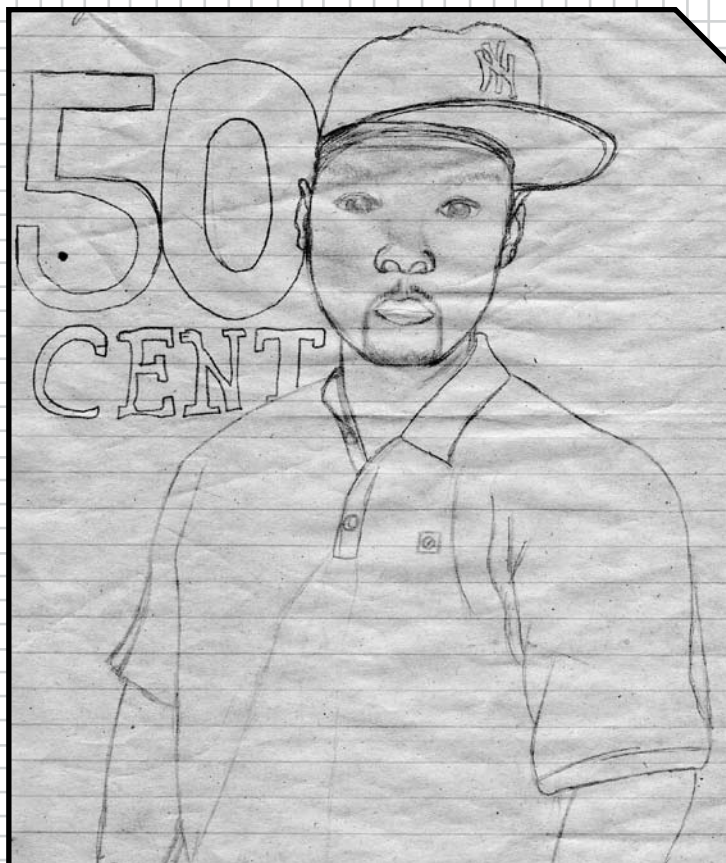
The beauty in your eyes demand
 Honesty, love and respect
 You're an angel in a pool of confusion
 Who stole my heart, yet we ain't met
 Long hair, full lips, to a lovely nose
 Body of a goddess, regal – such a beautiful soul

I cherish all you letters as I do my life
 You may be young but you ready
 To be a real deal ninja's wife
 The more we write, the closer I feel to you
 You make hell smell like heaven, your sweet perfume

I long to hug and kiss you in a way
 Only I know I can
 Give you thug passion from a real man
 I'd never hurt you, just give all my love to you
 Girl I'm a thug, are you still down?
 I promise to never judge you, only to love you

Friends for over a year now
 You forever raw and real wit' me
 Love and respect you more, than my own "family"
 Blood is thicker than water, so is mud
 From letter one you shown unconditional love

I pray what we got going will never end
 No matter who you marry in the future
 Always and forever we remain friends.



Dear Junior

Damn, lil' ninja, I got so much to say, but I don't know where to start. But you a G like myself, so I'ma let it flow from the heart.

Keep it all the way trill wit' ya', give you the ins and outs,

Because that the only way I've found to vent this frustration out.

I only held you twice,

But I held you close, the time we spent was limited, That's why it meant the most.

What you like one now and I never heard ya cry or seen your steps,

But I promise if life stay in my body,

I'll be there to help thru all the rest.

I'm trapped in a time capsule and my time is movin' very slow,

I know exactly who you are, but it's me I want you to know.

But you so young right now, you don't even know what ya' daddy is,

But when I come home watch and see you goin' everywhere daddy is.

The truth is so clear, I can sit back and smile for the moment,

Because I done been on cloud nine once,

Next time senior and junior gon' be on it.

I once heard that life was a witch,

Well I'm beginnin' to think that's true,

Because only a witch is this devious, to keep me away from you.

But go ahead lil' ninja, have fun and do what ya' do,

Because '09 is comin' soon, and then it'll be me and you.

While it's not so amazing for a family to be without their father due to incarceration, the guilt and thoughts that derive from that guilt are an amazing testament to what the human spirit is capable of. And this is displayed through "Amazing's" writing. The first poem he sends us is a very sad initiated conversation with his son who he hasn't seen in quite some time, but assures his son he'll be getting out to take care of the rest. The second poem he sends is a very raw and uncut challenge to the world. "You've created it, now face it!" And the best part about it for us was that we felt he deserved to say it. He's writing from the Polk Correctional Institution in Butner, North Carolina.

The Truth

Let me introduce y'all, to my amazing faces
Oops my bad, le me rephrase that amazing graces.

Please don't get out of line,
Cause I'll give you an amazing face lift, even the system
know I'm amazing that's why they keep me in these
grewish bracelets

They can keep my body in shackles but my
Minds never wasted, and you can take my freedom for
now, but my mind just replaced it.

They say I'm a threat, true because my mind so amazing,
now that's the real reason they got me locked in this 10
by 12 basement

I'm a 26 year old phenom, a modern
Day genius so face it, give me the respect I deserve, or
find yourself in one of amazing traces.

Be honest look around, I'm Neo and the world is the
matrix, y'all created a monster here he is, deal wit' it,
face it.

DARRON GARCIA

Alone

Alone I dwell in this cold, barren room amongst these masses. The legion of the doomed. Long forgotten by the few who once loved me. Just a memory... fades away like an old picture. I've been reduced to nothingness. Just a faceless number forced to endure the hardships of "father time." Some will survive this living hell, yet many more will fall victim... the weak have no place here. But like a single match struck in the abyss of eternal darkness, I cling mightily to that faint glimmer of light in hopes of waking to see the morning dawn...

I carry a burdensome load on my shoulders as if all the transgressions of the world have been bestowed upon me. Yet still... I somehow continue to summon the will to trudge throughout this sea of anguish. My strength I feel weakening like a mortal wound inflicted upon my spirit but onward my wayward soul continues to travel far off in the distance... the very far distance of my minds eye, I can see the gentle shores of tranquility shimmering like diamonds embedded upon the sands of time.

My opportunities in this life never came knocking. The few doors I did open came at a high price. For my name now bears the scar of a convicted man. Branded by a society that would never conform to my ideas, nor I theirs. Banished

If you're into amazing and honest writing where the writer takes you on a journey through an intelligent mind, you should definitely read this next writer. He's writing from the Sacramento County Jail in Sacramento, CA. He sends us a piece called, "Alone," where he takes us on a ride through his thought process during a time when his thoughts can be a burden if he lets them, but through all of it he remains level headed as is displayed in his piece. The ending is very sad and damn near brought us to tears. We could tell he was speaking from thoughts he's had in his mind for quite awhile. We are grateful for this share and hopefully we can help him express himself to those who want to listen.

to "exist" in exile amongst the multitudes of "faceless" people who's voices remain unheard. No longer do I feel the "closeness" that once graced those united in poverty. All traces of joy have long since been replaced by the never-ending sounds of sirens responding to yet another random act of violence. Grieving mothers watch helplessly as their child's blood and shattered dreams pour slowly into the cracks and gutters of the unforgiving streets they once called home.

I've suffered far too much in this world not to hope for the possibility of another. Each night I pray to God through his son the holy spirit but from this cell I often wonder does he hear it? I know not what the future holds but as I kneel here scrawling my confessions into these pillars of purgatory I find myself certain of one thing... that I will meet my demise... alone.

Not A Dream, A Living Nightmare (Part 1)

Attention north facility. The north facility alarm testing will now commence. It is also time for the 1700-hour mandatory standing count. All inmates stand by your bunks. Start count. Start count...

Code 1! Code 1! All inmates on the yard get down on the ground in a prone position! Code 1!

Yard is open...

Yard recall, all inmates return to your housing units...

Stand by your doors...

No, these are not my dreams. They are my nightmares... reality! A reality that has caused me to become bitter. Bitter at my wife, because I haven't seen her or my son in almost a year. Bitter at my mom and dad because they haven't written me in almost year. Bitter at the world because I'm not a part of it. Bitter at myself because I put myself in this predicament.

We've all heard that phrase, "you don't know what you've got, until it's gone." How true that is. Not a day goes by that I don't wish that I were at home with my son being the father to him that he deserves. Or being the husband that my wife deserves.

If I could go back and change any of this, I wouldn't, because then I would never learn from my mistakes. I know that sounds crazy but it's true. You see this isn't my first time in prison. I've been in here before. No I'm not proud of that but it's the sad truth.

I started coming to jail when I was 11 years old. Although I committed my first heinous crime when I was 10 years old. I was playing in an abounded building and I couldn't see. So I started lighting matches for light. I threw the matches before the flame burnt my fingers. Usually they

Writing from the State Prison Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, CA, we give you a man with an incredible way of expressing himself. He sends us a piece written in essay form and he also sends a poem about love lost but not forgotten. The first piece, "Not A Dream, A Living Nightmare," is about his thoughts while in prison. And those thoughts are brilliant in that they are so honestly introspective and reveal a whole lot about his extraordinary character. With thoughts like these he has us waiting by our mailboxes for more... Thank you!

went out, but one didn't. The building caught fire. When the fire hit the gas line, the other sixteen buildings that were connected to it also caught fire. Luckily no tenants lived in any of the buildings.

I tried to lie my way out of the situation but I blamed an imaginary person. But there was a witness that saw me run from the building. I eventually got caught and went to juvenile hall and was placed on two years probation. All of that happened when I was ten. I'm now thirty years old.

What I've learned in my twenty years of criminalistic behavior is that the biggest fear of all, if you survive, its change. You're not "down" if you want to live life. You're a "sucker" That's not true. "Change" is okay.

The question is when are you going to be man or woman, and decide its time to start thinking for yourself? How long will you let something dictate your life? I've been where you've been, and I'm where you are.

If you're still reading this then maybe I've caught your attention. Hopefully I'll say something that'll hit home. Something that helps you to realize that change is okay. Life is too short. Don't let it pass you by.

I have a date to go home next year. And I can't wait. Then I realize that I could easily be in my cellies situation. He doesn't have a date. He's been down since I was three. That's 27 years! His first time coming to prison was for the rest of his life.

To all my young men and women when you get out. Stay out! Live life. Experience the joys of life. Because there's more to it than walking the yard with the "homies"

A Love Lost, But Not Forgotten

If I only had the guts to tell you
What's in my heart
I would
If I could somehow
Put aside my pride
And get past this outer wall
That I call my ego
Then I would
But I've got an image to maintain
An image for all to see
But not the world
Oh no!
You see because the "all,"
Is really me,
The image that looks back,
Whenever I look at my own reflection
In the mirror.

If I could only express my feelings
I would
If I could just quiet the pride,
And shut up the ego
Then I would
I'd walk to the end of the Earth,
And shout this from the highest
mountain

My love for you burns deep within
My heart!
Like molten lava deep within
A sleeping volcano,
Waiting to erupt.

If I only had the courage
To speak my mind
I would

If I could run away from
The pride,
And hide from my ego
Then I would
And even though I run fast,
Problem truly isn't a problem,
Only a desire,
My desire -
To release the words that are
Trapped deep inside of my heart,
And open up the floodgates
That have swelled within
My body,
Before I drown.

If I could only turn back
The hands of time
I would

Back to a time when
Pride didn't matter
As much
And bruised egos quickly healed
Then I would
But I can't!
Now all I have left
Are just memories,
Memories of what used to be,
And thoughts of what
Could have been.

If I only knew then,
What I know now
That time stands still for no one,
I would've done things different,
You see now I understand,
What it really means,
To not know what you have
Until it truly is gone,
But no matter where the
Road of life takes me
You will always
Have a special place in my heart,
That can never be replaced
A love lost
But not forgotten.

My Senses

My senses are strong and they keep me alert.
And they help me to be aware of trouble, and keep me
safe from dirt. My senses has help me, see things my
two eyes could not see.
My strong senses is what going to help me set myself
free.
As I struggle letting my better senses lead my way.
Keeping my faith in God as I pray.
My senses lead me, when my ego makes me act blind,
But my senses let me know that war starts in my mind.
My senses help my better judgment to be in time.
And my senses make my direction in life not so hard to
find.
My senses, pick up on things,
That are easy for a simple minded person to pick up on.
My senses help me: not to get so far gone.
My senses help me to feel O.K. when I am feeling all
alone.
When I am mad I lose all my sense of direction,
That's the only time my senses
Are not able to lead me, guide me, and protect me.
It's like I be helpless.
Then when my keen senses, and intuitive senses kick
back in
Driving all my anger and madness away.
Then I be able to have a sane and realistic attitude
To a situation or problem.
My senses are to me one of the most important organs
of my body. Cause my senses help me to be in touch
with the taste
And every texture and flavor of the food I eat.
My senses help me to speak the right words
When I open my mouth to talk
My senses have saved me from being tricked out of my
life
Many times in the past.

We haven't heard from this really consistent writer in a minute so it's a pleasure to finally receive something from him in the mail again. He's writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. He speaks a lot about God and going through hard times, but we find it refreshing to hear from him because he brings a sort of repetitive nature that we aren't used to. He often uses poems where he repeats the same line before going into his thoughts and we find that it adds power to the poem when done right. He does this with "Hard Times Have Taught Me Everything I Know," and it really hit home for us because we've all been through hard times that we could create a list about, and that's basically what he does. Thank you for keeping us in your thoughts and hopefully there won't be too much time in between the next time we hear from you again. We all hope you're doing well and again, thanks.

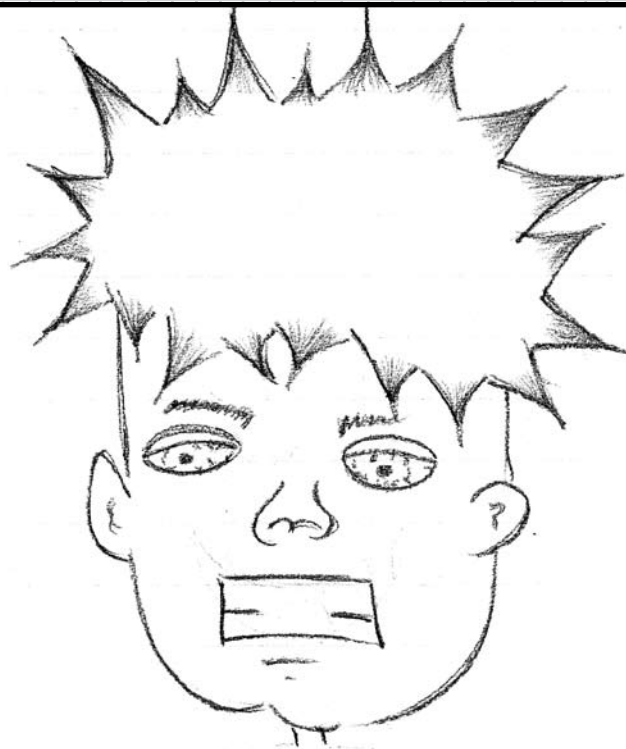
Why Do I Feel This Way?

Why do I feel this way? I don't know my feeling are hard for me to keep up with because they are always on the go not helping me to know why do I feel this way. My feelings are always going from one way to another way at times being lost for words not knowing what to say, but I still question myself as to why do I feel this way and what way that is, I don't know it's hard times I feel the world is against me. Why I don't know.

It's times I feel I have nothing to live for. Why I don't know. It's times I feel like I am up against the world. Why I don't know. It's times I feel I have everything to live for. Why I don't know. Times I feel like just bring until I can't cry no more. Why I don't know sometimes I feel the need to love even the ones who hate me. Why I don't know. What makes me feel this way.

It's times I feel like killing and taking the life of another. Why I don't know. What makes me feel this way? It's times I feel like the walls are fastly closing in on me. Why I don't know? It's times I feel I am ready to go to war with the world all by myself. Why? I don't know. It's times I feel like I have been lost and forgotten within these steel gates and brick walls of prison life. Why I feel this way? I don't know.

It's times I feel the ones I know on the outside such as my family, friends and the ones I have grown up with have turned they back on me just because they feel I got to spend the rest of my life in prison. But little that they know God has the last say so. Why? I do not know.



Being Content

I have learned from the words of the Apostle Paul, and from my personal experience of doing a long time locked down in a one-man cell, how to be content no matter how bad the moment may seem. I must be content through it cause I know as long as I am content I will make it. And the more faith and trust I have in God the more content I have become with myself and more content with whatever each day had to bring my way cause I learn to take each day in strive cause when I am content I am happy and at peace with myself. And being content helps me to be thankful with what God has in store for me each day. The good and bad, the happy and sad cause it's some meaning behind everything that takes place in life.

It is all about being content, just accepting things the way they are. And being satisfied and to keep myself limited in requirement and attachments is what content is all about cause at all times I want to be in contentment and be at ease in the mind and being content has showed me what the feeling of true freedom is and being content has brought to me a free state of mind.

I'm Caught But Not Bought

I was caught by a system called D.O.C prison system at a very young age. Not knowing much, but my head was like a bull and my young mind was not about to be pulled into the systematic way of thinking and living. Which I did not have much control over myself cause I was caught by the system, but I was not the fool or young fool the system thought I was.

I was wild but I'm not a dumb child. It didn't take me long to figure out how this system works because I was not all that bright. I did have a little common sense. To know not to let the system buy me like they was buying so many other souls because my soul wasn't for sale. The more time I spent in the system, the more I learned about all the different ways and tricks the system use to get the weaker minded convicts or inmates to sell the soul for a little of nothing. My young heart knew from the start, that I was not going to let the system buy me at a cost.

I learned all the different ways of how the system mislead and deceive other convicts to go against one another, fight one another, and sometimes these convicts would go as far as trying to kill each other. And I learn about all the many forms of manipulation the system use to get a convict to commit his mind and soul into the system way of thinking and acting. Which goes back to the old saying if you control a man mind you don't have to worry about his actions. But system way is if they can buy a convict mind and soul, they don't have to worry about his actions. And the system knew the more convicts they had on they side the easier it would be for them to deal with the minority ones who was willing to go against the system and stand up for they rights. These was the ones could not be bought by the system.

Thinking To Make It

Thinking it is a must. I had to learn the hard way, how to think my way around things. Cause when I was young I did not have anything to think with. Of course I had a mind. But I did not have enough insight of knowledge to know to use my mind and thought process to my advantage. When a situation came up, when I had to use my mind to think, before acting without thinking. Making the situation turn out to be a real problem. When thinking for that moment could have not made things get worse then they had to be.

There have been many times in my life — young and older life — Where I did not consider thinking as seriously as I should have. Cause I was a person who was not highly developed with an intellectual power to think very well. As a great thinker, my first reaction to anything was to act before thinking. That's after I got myself in a mess. Then I would think about all the mistakes I done made. It seems a little too late for that. Then at the same time it don't be too late. But this is the same action I would take time after time.

Then as the years was going by, as I was getting up in age, I went to learning more about how to use my thinking cap. I had saw for myself, how I had to become in order to make it. And the more I took time out to think, things was getting better for me. And thinking was schooling me in every way I can imagine. So my goal was to become a great thinker in everything I did.

*Hard times have helped me to understand,
 Why hard times are a part of life and living*

Hard Times Have Taught Me Everything I Know

Hard times have taught me everything I know.

Hard times have brought the best out of me
 And showed me which way to go.

Hard times have made me out of a real man.

Hard times have helped me to be the best I can.

Hard times have helped me to build a better life for
 myself

That cannot be taking away by no other hands other
 then God.

Hard times have helped me to understand,

Why hard times are a part of life and living

And these same hard times have helped me to
 understand

The reason for adversity,

The reason for suffering

The reason for obstacles.

Hard times have helped me appreciate the good and the
 bad times. Hard times have schooled me more than any
 other times in my life 'Cause when times got hard for me
 I had to think and put my mind to work like never before
 'Cause any other times would be taking for granted.

Hard times have shaped me.

Hard times have molded me to be all I can be.

Hard times have helped me to see and feel all the pain

And hardships I have took my mother through.

Hard times have helped me to see

How hard it was for my baby brother Sedrick,

And my baby sister Tiffany,

When they big brother was not able to be there for them
 the most

Not because I did not want to be there for them

But I was locked up every time I looked around.

Hard times have taught me how to humble myself

And endure the hardships cause it would all pay off at
 the end.

Hard times have taught me how to keep my head up

And not to panic when the going get tough.

Hard times have taught me how to deal with stress

And how not to stress myself out when the ball was
 not in my court. Hard times have taught me how to be
 productive

During the storms of struggling.

Hard times have helped me to see

And know that my life experience alone

With all the hard times I have been through

Was a part of my training for what was ahead.

Hard times have taught me how to survive the odds

When I was up against great numbers.

Hard times have pushed me to studying

And reading the scriptures in search for the truth.

Hard times have taught me how to have faith

And put all my trust before God.

Hard times have made me strive just that much harder

To make it when it seemed as if I could not take it
 anymore.

Hard times have helped me to love every bit of my pains
 and suffering 'Cause now I see that it was all good.

Loss Of Innocence (Putting In The Work)

So you want to change huh? That's good, the only way it's going to happen, is you must be willing by; any means necessary! Change is not easy, but the process begins internally, from the heart out. Here is an example of someone I admire and respect who wanted to change, and agreed to do the work.

I chose to write about the Loss of Innocence class because I truly believe that anyone can become a vital resource, after accepting responsibility of using one's ability (power) to be a negative influence, and a liability to one's self, family, and community.

At one point in our lives we have all been victims of violence one way or another. I came to understand that violence is a cruel, and continuous vicious cycle that repeats itself until someone or something is destroyed, including one's self. You can't hurt anyone or anything without hurting yourself first, and most definitely in the consequences phase of the actions that was perpetrated. There is hope for the perpetrator who was once a victim, it is through intervention, one of which I myself have benefited from, and also witnessing other interventions of individuals just like you and me who made a conscious decision to stop being violent. Educating ourselves, about violence and gaining self awareness is a key factor in the restoration (rebuild or restore) process, but I would like to take you the reader, a little further and talk about why so many of us become the feared perpetrators of violence. To this end I am pleased to share such a experience I witnessed, and participated in one of my Loss of Innocence classes while in Resolve To Stop the Violence Program (R.S.V.P.)

I'm now writing from the California State Prison — Solano, I was transferred from the California Medical Facility because my classification score was reduced for doing a favorable program, I embrace my authentic (true) self everyday, through prayer and deep reflection deep within myself, and why not? The only people, places, and things I can change is zero (0), we can only change ourselves, if we are willing to stop our own violence, take it from me, one expert of how to commit violence, to you (expert). Let us become experts in stopping our violence, and using our ability (power) for more nobler deeds, caring for ourselves, our families, children, and the communities we represent, and last but not least to our victims, whom we verily, rarely think about, until it's too late.

I was standing in front of a blackboard in Classroom C, facing a group of twenty violent men, getting ready to lead a Loss of Innocence class. Having discovered my own loss of innocence in this program, my life is so much better, my future is bright, I've gained a special interest in working with offenders such as myself on issues around victimization. I believe that at one point in time we have all been victims of violence; because of this some of us still carry resentments, guilt, and shame, towards others, as well as toward ourselves.

During this particular Loss of Innocence class, I was able to offer my support and guidance assisting another member of the stop the violence community, Asofia T. Ale, with his restoration cycle. A Restoration Cycle is a loss of Innocence exercise that identifies and deals with hurt and loss, forgiveness and restoration. First I invited FiaFia into the center of the half circle to sit facing the group. FiaFia is a muscular man who stands six foot four and weighs about 300 lbs. With broad shoulders, and dreadlocks that topple over his crown, past his shoulders, his presence alone is intimidating.

FiaFia looked at me with a smile and nodded. "What's up, Ricky?" he said in a deep tone.

I approached him, extending my right hand for him to

Writing from California State Prison — Solano in Vacaville, CA, we bring you this next Beat veteran who we haven't heard from in too long awhile. But after reading his piece, we can see that he hasn't been able to keep us posted lately for good reason. He's doing great work getting those he's incarcerated with to participate in healing, to dig deep within their souls to pull out the fact that none of us wake up one morning and decide to commit crimes. It's actually a cycle where we were once victims and we act out the pain of being a victim by victimizing others. People don't hurt people, "hurt" people hurt people. He talks about someone he assisted in finding the true cause for the consequences he's suffering and although there are many determining factors we can't deny the fact that we are the primary determining factors on if we will commit a crime or not. This is definitely a must read that will not only explain some very powerful work going on in prison, but will also reflect why we've missed his words in our publication. Watch out readers, you might learn something if you read on...

take. It was received with a firm grip and a gentle shake. "Are you ready to do this work, FiaFia?" I asked.

"Yeah, lets do this work, man" FiaFia said.

He took his seat in the center of the circle, and we began with the softening exercise. Sitting in the "notice self" position, we placed our right hands over our hearts and our left hands over our stomachs. Then we closed our eyes and began to take in deep breaths, paying attention to our breathing. The softening exercise is important because it allows the participant (in this case AsofiaFia), an opportunity to come back to himself and to be present in the moment. It also helps the participant and the group to be vulnerable and open during the disclosure to come. Everyone breathed slowly, in and out. We noticed our breathing and brought our awareness back to our bodies. I exhaled.

"I am here now," I said.

The group responded, "I am here now."

Then I slowly turned toward FiaFia and smiled. "You ready, Big Fia?" I asked again, in a mild voice, careful not to break the quiet mood in the classroom.

FiaFia smiled nervously and nodded.

"Well, before we begin," I said, "I want to support you, FiaFia. While you are disclosing, remember that you are in this classroom with us. You're in a safe place. If something comes up for you, remember that we are here for you and that we won't let anything happen to you, FiaFia. We got your back."

FiaFia looked at me for a moment and agreed with a nod. Facing the group, he sat up in his chair, and with both hands on his lap, he cleared his throat. He began to talk about his loss of Innocence. FiaFia talked about being abandoned by his mother as a child and how he experienced physical and sexual abuse by the people his mother left him with. He told us that at times his mother was gone for weeks

FiaFia talked about the sick things that had happened to him. Going into detail, he mentioned explicit and lewd acts he was coerced to perform, and also how he was often beaten. "What kind of person would do that to a child?" he asked, more as if he were talking to himself than to the group. I was afraid to continue with the exercise at this point because it appeared that FiaFia was starting to get angry, I was getting angry as well. Who would do such a thing to a child? I asked myself. FiaFia continued to share his loss of Innocence, and I scribed on the black board behind him, asking clarifying questions as we went along. "Why," I asked FiaFia, "was your mother gone all the time?" "She was a sportin' woman," he said. Back in the days, he explained, women that went out with numerous men were referred to as "sportin'" women. Even though FiaFia was answering the questions, I had a feeling that he was avoiding the core element of his experience of loss.

So, I repeated the question. "Why did your mother leave you, FiaFia?"

"She had to do what she had to do to get by."

Then I referred back to the board and all the information

I had scribed. We were at the part of the exercise where the main participant discloses resentment, guilt, and shame.

"There is something that should be on this board that you're not saying," I said. "I know what it is, but I can't put it up here if you don't say it."

FiaFia looked down at the floor. "I don't know," he answered in a raspy voice.

Then suddenly, it came. Like a flood, the dam broke. The pain and hurt that FiaFia had covered up for so many years was released and it spilled out into the half circle. FiaFia balled up and leaned forward in his chair and cried aloud. His pain and hurt shot around the room and greeted each one of us. The impact of violence perpetrated more than thirty years ago was revealed in this forty-year old man crouched before us in his chair crying and shaking uncontrollably. The whole group sat in the notice of self-position. Right hand over the heart, left hand over the stomach. The room was completely quiet except for FiaFia.

"She left me because she didn't want me," he said. "Damn, I thought there was something wrong with me because my mother left me like that. She didn't give a damn about me. She left me for dead."

Tears streamed from FiaFia's eyes. Looks of concern came from the group. Some men cried with FiaFia and others sat in their seats, staying in the notice self position. I, too, was crying and had to struggle to gain my composure.

I felt sad and empathized with what I was witnessing, because I too have experienced loss. After what seemed like forever, maybe 10 minutes, FiaFia looked around the room. He sat there for a moment and slowly placed his right hand over his heart and his left hand over his stomach, continuing to process his hurt.

"FiaFia, look at me," I said. He met my gaze. His eyes were red and his face was wet with tears. "This is where you want to be," I told FiaFia. "Don't separate from yourself. You need to feel this hurt and process it."

Once the exercise ended, we broke the circle and everyone gave FiaFia a group hug. The group was also instructed to check in with FiaFia during the day to make sure he was all right and to follow up with support. Since everyone was impacted by the exercise, we all agreed to

check in with each other as well.

The following day I sat down with FiaFia and we talked about what had come up for him during the exercise and how he was feeling. He said that he was relieved that he had had a chance to talk about his abandonment issues concerning his mother and that it felt like a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

He also talked about being able to accept his mother, and the work he had to do around forgiveness. He said that it wouldn't be easy to do the work but that now he has a sense of direction. As I sat there looking at FiaFia, I became overwhelmed with feelings of compassion and love. In my heart I knew that this individual had made a connection with his authentic self. The innocence that he lost so many years ago had been rediscovered.

"Yeah," FiaFia said embracing himself in a hug with both arms folded inward. "Whatever happens, I'll never let myself go."

Lastly, if only we could stop being experts and opinionated about what other people need to stop doing, or what they are doing wrong through our inventory taking of others, and began to take our own inventory, and notice ourselves, the good and the bad in our thoughts, actions, and deeds. Then maybe we can or could expertly a+a=c (awareness + action = change) do the most important work we will ever do, and that is become accountable, and responsible for who we are, and who we want to be. We can choose to be the best human beings we can despite our situation, we don't have to hurt others, or ourselves by always putting ourselves first, or assuming that we are better than other people, or lesser than. Everyone is entitled to define their own reality, we don't want anyone defining our reality, then why do we do it to others?

We need to take the two-foot drop, to our hearts, from our heads, always thinking we know, what we can't possibly know. But we can develop empathy in our hearts for other people, so we can relate, understand, and embrace our humanity, by embracing others.

TROY BULLOCK

How Many More

How many more,

Will have to die before we educate ourselves and rise up and say "No more?" Everyday we lose young soldiers to the war in the ghettos. Killing our own for some materialistic things.

How many more,

Sisters will have to turn to another woman, because we keep getting sent to the Pen over and over again? And not there for them when they need the comfort of a man. Someone to hold their hands and tell them how beautiful they are. You know it is not all their fault, some of the blame is ours. So tell me?

How many more,

Homeless people have to be on the street digging through the garbage to find food to eat, being found in the alleyways frozen stiff because there was no place to offer them heat?

What a great and very sad question to pose on us and our readers. And this question is posed all the way from the Attica Correctional Facility in Attica, New York, one of the oldest and most notorious prisons in the country. The question is: "How Many More?" and you can fill in the blanks from your own experiences, but this week this writer does just that. Using "How Many More..." repetitively to add power to that statement, Troy ponders how many more people will have to get locked up, how many more people will have to die, before we actually get that our lifestyles are doing nothing but hurting ourselves. We think it's a great question to ask and also sort of wonder if anyone has an answer to "How Many More?"

How many more,

Please tell me now, I need to know?

How many more,

Babies will be born addicted to drugs or born dying from AIDS before they even see two days, because there is no Medicaid or help to save their precious life?

How many more,

Would have to find themselves in cages before he or she wakes up and gets it right. Tell me, how many more?

Meeting With The Hit Man

Two actors enter scene. Both wear (or take seats in front of) identifying signs — but signs are turned away from audience.

Hit Man: "Yeah, what can I do for you?"

Customer: (Nervously) "Well, I've heard that you specialize in, how should I say? — the 'disposal' business..."

Hit Man: (Chuckling) "Yeah, I put people's lights out... if that's what you mean..."

Customer: (Conspiratorially) "Good. I gotta job for ya'..."

Hit Man: "Well, lemme tell ya, ya come ta the right place. 'Cause, see, personally, I don't care. I kill 'em all. Men, women, children — even little babies in their momma's wombs. 'Murder, Inc.,' that's me. Just as long as there's some money ta be made, I'll 'ice' anybody... So, tell me, who's da 'mark' ya want done in?"

Customer: (A bit hesitantly and ashamed) "Well, it's me..."

Hit Man: (Nods understandingly and reflectively) "Yeah, well, nuttin' unusual 'bout that... Tell ya de truth, most of my customers contract for their own demise. Sorta odd, to be sure, but what the hell? (Shrugs) But, who am I to judge? Like I said, as long as I get mah bucks, that's all I really care about..."

Customer: "Okay. Speaking of that, how much is this a-gonna cost me?"

Hit Man: "Oh, it's gonna be quite a bit. But, don't worry your pretty head about it — I gotta 'E-Z payment plan.' You can just pay me a little bit at a time... a little change here, a little change there, ya know... and then one day, maybe when you least expect it — (makes 'gun' with finger) BOOM!! — I'll go ahead and put your lights on out for you..."

Customer: (Looking hopeful) "So, it's gonna be quick,

We've made a new friend at The Beat through the slow paced mail system and because we enjoy him so much we must say this now. We've written many personal letters to people who are incarcerated (we actually wish we could employ someone who would take just that on as a full-time job.) And though we know Wild Bill will never do anything to harm us, we should also let it be known that we are very short staffed and if he doesn't receive a reply to one of his many letters, patience is needed because this is a weekly publication and we also have lives outside of work. This editor will explain more about it to him in a personal letter that we'll send him with this issue. We really would like to be able to keep correspondence open, especially with great thinkers like him, however, we can't be expected to do too much as we already have a tremendous amount on our occupational and personal plates, but we do try our hardest to keep lines of communication open. Well, enough of that, let's get to introducing this extraordinary writer. He blows us away again with his great insights and versatile way of reaching many subjects. He's writing from the Marion Correctional Institution in Marion, North Carolina. And we can't say enough to express what his newfound friendship means to us, especially to this editor who has revealed himself to Wild Bill and now must write him a letter. So, without further ado, brace yourselves for some empowering writing...

then?"

Hit Man: (Grinning an evil grin) "No, not necessarily... A lot of my 'clients' I like to take out long and slow... But, don't worry — 'No extra charge!'" (He adds, laughing)

Customer: (Standing) "Okay, so we got us a deal then?"

Hit Man: (Stands and shakes customer's hand warmly) "Yeah, sure do. Don't worry 'bout a thing. You just keep those payments comin' in and I'll have ya dead and buried in no time..."

Customer: "Very well. Good day to you, sir..."

Hit Man: "Yeah, sure. Nice doin' bizness with ya. Be seein' ya around..." (He adds with an evil chuckle)

Customer departs. Hit Man stands there eying him for awhile. Then, shaking his head, he walks slowly off... Signs are revealed. "Customer" is "Smoker." "Hit Man" is "Big Tobacco."

The Crocodile

The crocodile
Half-submerged
In gray, murky waters
Gazes at me
Slit-eyes gleaming
His heart's desire
To devour me whole
So clearly stamped
Upon his ancient face...

Have we met before?
Perhaps beside the Congo or the Nile?
In some bygone days
When I met one of many ends
Providing sustenance
Just generic protein
To those huge, clasping jaws...?

No there's more
I believe he wishes to consume
My very soul
To eat me slowly
Till I'm little more
Than cosmic dust
Twisting in the wind

Or merely detritus floating
Forlornly
At the bottom
In the mud

Of some dark, nameless estuary

So such is my fate
And the best knows it...
And that is why he smiles.

Keep On Writin'
I go to little meetings,
Sometimes coffee-shops,
What-have-you...

And share a few verses

And then some well-meaning admirer
Will come up,
And day,
"Oh, I really liked your poetry..."

Then we'll chit-chat, lightly, for awhile

And, when things wind down
Almost invariably,
They'll close with some variation of,
"Well, keep on writin'..."

I smile, politely
But, inside
I feel rather exasperated
And, sometimes
I wish to throttle them,
While screaming...

"You don't bloody well get it, do you?
I simply cannot not write!
A 30-year smoker,
Or a 40-year junkie
Would have an easier time,
Kicking their so-called 'habits'
Than would I,
Of makin' it thru' this crazy world
Without placing pen on paper
And trying to make some sense,
To tease a few degrees of meaning
From all this insanity
I've experienced...

"My soul demands it."

The Cross

The cross
 The rusty, blood-stained
 Nails
 Penetrating
 Oh-so-slowly...

While the Centurions
 Laugh and play
 And gamble
 In gleeful abandon...

And the on-lookers
 Excepting my mom
 Gawk and mock
 Malevolently...

Each one's heart
 Secretly horrified
 Wondering when
 Their day will come...

And the pain
 Layered on,
 Exquisite in its depth
 Seems to existentially
 Crush
 My very being...

When, oh when, Lord
 Oh when will it stop?

Please tell me

Life Sentence

You transgress. They row you way out into a shark-filled sea. They toss you overboard.

You say, "This is pretty bad. But, can I at least try to swim back to shore?"

They say, "No, you son of a witch, you gotta just keep treading water — until either the sharks get you, or you just get tired and drown..."

Praying

Oh, to fight the temptation. To refrain from saying, "Lord, this is what I want. And I want it right now..."

This age-old temptation, the one that leads to damnation, is, likely, the root of all evil.

One brought about, no doubt, by forgetting there really is no "I"

Creeping Up

As I write this,
 In the year of our
 Lord, 2007
 1907 is about the furthest
 Year back
 In which many people
 Were born
 Who are still "with us" today...

Oh, there are a few
 "Hangers-on," of course
 With earlier birthdays
 But their "quality of life,"
 For most,
 Can't be worth much anyway...

So I'm lookin' back,
 Apprehensively
 At 1907 as kind of a
 Creeping shadow
 One that, inexorably,
 Marches forward...

There's a certain date,
 1958
 Square in its path
 That it is bound, eventually
 To overtake...

And I want to scream
 At 1958
 "Hey, get out of the way!
 Can't you see that the
 Bloody bastard
 Scythe in hand
 Is edging ever-onwards
 This way...?"

But 1958, just stands there
 Immovable
 Dumb as an ox
 While the shadow
 Creeps forever forward...

My Soul Is A Succubus

My soul is a succubus
 Mercilessly draining
 Every drop
 Of creative fervor
 From my earthly being...

Leading me beside
 Dark pastures
 Where fanged abominations
 Lie-in-wait
 Salivating
 In eager anticipation
 Of resuming their feasting...

Every new tragedy
 Just another bite
 Another scrumptious morsel
 Of my mortal flesh...

While the bleeding
 Semi-corpse
 That remains
 Screaming in existential agony

Forlornly authors
 Yet another note
 Yet another communiqué
 Yet another missive
 From the corridors
 Of a wildly reverberating
 Lunatic bin...

Terrorists Fallin' Down From The Sky

Intro: "Can you say '9-11,' boys and girls?"

Chorus:
Oooh, baby
Terrorists fallin' down
From the sky

Oooh, baby
Time has come
For more terrorists to die...

Oooh, baby
I think we're bein' yold
A bunch of lies

Oooh, baby
I think we know
The reason why...

1st Verse:
It's all a cover
A stupid scam

Tryin' to pretend
They really give a damn

Yeah, they just wanna take
Out liberties
Fleece us like
A bunch of sheep

Scare us right into
Submission
So we won't worry about
The darkness to come...

It's 'cause the Roman Empire
Has rose again
Tryin' to enslave
All other men

Lockin' everybody up
In prison cells
King George leading our country
Right straight to hell...

REPEAT CHORUS

Bridge:
Everybody be afraid now...

Yeah, everybody be afraid now...

2nd verse:
The Bushes and the Sauds
Buddy-buddy as can be
Oil, money and power
Twin monarchies

George "Dubya" just a puppet
Doin' corporate will
Openin' the back door
So they can come in and steal...

Halliburton
Our news Boss Hog
Snout buried deep
In the pork-barrel trough...

Waggin' war
Just to turn a buck
A few kids dead?
Well, just tough luck...

Takin' advantage
Of tragedy
Just to indulge
Runaway greed...



I Just Love The Way Those Southern Girls Talk...

1st Verse:
Well, the Beach Boys Song
About those California Girls
And there ain't no doubt
They're some of the prettiest
In the world...

But there's just one thing
That really hits me where
I live
And that's to hear the sweet
Sound coming
From a pair of Southern lips...

It's a sound that'll knock you
Straight down to your knees...
It'll set a proud man to
Beggin'
"Yes, ma'am, darlin' please..."

Build:
Oh, Lord, when they got
That honey drippin'
Right out of their mouths
That's how you'll know
They're from way down
South...

Chorus:
Yeah, I just love the way
They talk
And the sexy way they walk
Just can't resist the way
That they say
"Hey, y'all!"
With that lovely Southern
Drawl...

Nowhere in this world
Will you ever hear a
Sweeter sound
Then when a Southern Belle says,
"Why, shor shugar let's go out
on the town..."

I really don't know
How just a voice can
Turn me on so
But it just pushes my buttons
The one that says, "Go!"

That slow molasses drawl
Just knocks me right outa
My socks
'Cause yes, Lord, I JUST
LOVE THE WA-AY
THOSE SOUTHERN GIRLS
TALK...

Bridge:

Yeah, those gals down in Dixie
They got candy on their
Tongues...
It's enough to make a man
Just flat-out come undone...

2nd Verse:
It's sugar magnolias swaying
In a sweet Southern breeze...
It's the rain comin' down
Thru' those long-leaf
Georgia pine trees...

It's the honey suckle blossoms
A-bloomin' in the spring...
It's the three-part harmonies
That the grateful dead
Used to sing...

Now Dolly and Kellie Pickler
They do it the best I
Ever heard
Love the way they stretch
Out those vowels
In every single word...

REPEAT BUILD
AND
CHORUS
and
fade...

Death Row

Hey it's no big deal
Maybe they should just call it
The "early death penalty,"
'Cause it's sure not like
Every last soul on earth
Isn't on it...

See that cemetery over there, bud?
Well, guess what?
They got a spot for you...

You can diet, take vitamins and exercise
All you want...

In the end,
It won't matter...

For time,
And gravity
Always,
Eventually,
Reclaim
What they own...

Yep, the black-robed parson
Awaits
Bible-in-hand
To intone those infamous lines
About
"Ashes to ashes
dust to dust..."
And all that crap

All over again...

A Quiet Christmas Eve

Gazing out into the snow
On this quiet Christmas Eve
Wood-stove's warmth enveloping
Putting my soul at ease...

Christ's great love
Will be remembered tomorrow
A brief respite, at least
From our world's many sorrows...

Would that every day
Be as that on the horizon
Lived in the wonderful wisdom
Brought by the son...

For such, many men will pray
As they turn in tonight
That all men, all year thru'
Might live by the light...

And, until that great day comes
They will quietly do what they can
To follow the path
Blazed by the son of man...

So, let us turn in
With gladness in our hearts
For tomorrow we will celebrate
Our journey's start...

When a child lay in a manger
Held tenderly by Mary his mom
And lowly shepherds, like us
Welcomed the Son of God...

Such an event!
Such a blessing received!
Let's remember it well
On this quiet Christmas Eve... Locked inside a cage?

Infinity (Astrophysics As It Relates To Human Spirituality)

Our universe has,
At least,
50 billion galaxies

Perhaps infinitely more...

Not solar systems,
Mind you,
But galaxies...

Each containing,
In a mind boggling vastness of its
own
Millions upon millions of individual
stars...

And all this emerged,
In less than a second
From a point,
So tiny,
It had no physical dimensions...

To explain this
Scientists found themselves
A bit "stuck"

And wound up sounding
Rather akin to medieval priests
Testily saying,
"Don't ask what made God..."

They did determine,
However
That were gravity
Only slightly stronger
Stars would flame out
In only a single year...

And the universe would be
A kingdom of cinders

Without life.

Well, as the author of
Ecclesiastes said:
"There's nothing new under the
sun..."
And, indeed

Judeo-Christian theology
Has held,
For millennia,
That God created our universe
Ex nihilo
Out of nothing...

So why do biologists
And believers
Fight
Like cats and dogs
When, in reality
A synthesis
Is not only possible
But quite reasonable...

The main question with
Which I concern myself,
However
Utterly selfish, I'll admit
Is this:

Just how in the hell
Amidst all this vastness
Did I manage to get myself

She Said

She said she was my friend but she turned her back... now I know her words weren't facts. If they was she'd still be here... to wipe away these lonely tears of sorrow, hurt and pain... wondering if I'll ever see her again. To ask her why she left me when I needed her so... she's in North Carolina, I really don't know... I love her with all my heart and soul but I must move on... with all this pain, heartache, and loneliness.

She said that, and she said this... leaving me with the memories of her tender hugs and kisses. And all the times we made passionate love... living the lives of hustling thugs. She knew there was a chance that I would end up in jail... and possibly a prison cell.

She said she'll stick beside me through thick and thin... when I got locked up she started to change, saying it was for the best. She left... not giving a damn about how I felt. So much sorrow, heartache, and pain... knowing it will never be the same without my baby Brianna. With her reddish brown hair and lovely smile, Desire sparkling in her beautiful eyes. Touching my heart in a special way... I think about my baby, night and day.

She said that and she said this, leaving me with the memories of her tender hugs and kisses, and all the times we made passionate love. Living the lives of hustling thugs. She knew there was a chance that I would end up in jail and possibly a prison cell.

As I sit in my cell doing time I sing this song cause you're on my mind. Ya baby girl it's all I can do. The love in my heart is only for you. I'm sorry for all the times that I've caused you pain. Even though I was there to hold your hand. Wiping your tears away as they fell like rain. Now as my tears roll down my face. Realizing no other woman can take your place. Haunted by all found memories that we've shared. Running my fingers through your beautiful and bright. Holding you in my warm embrace on a cold winter night.

Ya baby girl I'll son be released. I want you to come on back home to me. I'll wait for you til the end of time. In my heart and soul you'll always be mine. Even if I'm with another girl, you will always be my number one in the world. I love you girl for a fact. My baby Brianna I want you back.

She said that, and she said this. Leaving me with the memories of her tender hugs and kisses. And all the times we made passionate love. Living the lives of hustling thugs. She knew there was a chance that I would end up in jail and possibly in a prison cell.

She said she said she said so many things. Now I only see her in my dreams. One day I hope to wake up finding her near. Running my fingers through her beautiful hair.

I love you Brianna where ever you are. You hold the key to my heart. I know I'll always feel this way. Thinking of you night and day, yea, yea come on back home baby, I'm waiting

Talk about versatility! This next Beat Without veteran blasts us in the face with three very different poems. The first is his own perspective of how the world we live in today is failing, which we don't agree with fully, but we can understand at least where he's coming from. The second is a poem to a woman who evidently holds his heart in her hands. We hope she holds it in high regard. And last but assuredly not least, is a poem to his mother who we know is a sweet woman from what he wrote about her. Unfortunately she passed because she sounded like an amazing woman. He's writing from the Washington Correctional Institution in Chipley, Florida. We are grateful to have known Cecil and are thankful for all he's shared thus far keeping in mind that there will probably be more to come...

Dear Mom

Dear mom I sing this song for you, and all the things you used to do. To bring us kid's joy and happiness. Momma you've always been nothing but the best.

Even when we did things that were bad, you'd always reprimand us with a tender hand. I remember you'd buy us ice cream on the weekend. Taking us to Hobart Park, where we learned how to swim, on our summer vacations. Even took us shopping for school clothes to last us through the years. Momma I will always hold these memories dear. Many times we had only grilled cheese sandwiches to eat. But you always made sure we had shoes on our feet.

Than I started going to jail, you'd always come to visit me in my prison cell. Bringing me the things I needed. Making sure I had money to order canteen. I love you momma for all that you did. Showing your unconditional love when we were kids.

Dear mom I sing this song for you. And all the things we use to do. To bring us kids joy and happiness. Momma you've always been the best.

I'm sorry for all the hurt and pain I've caused. Running the street, breaking the law. Leaving home at a very young age, cause of the pain and misery I used to see on your face. And the struggle you endured raising four kids. Momma I always missed you but I couldn't come home, cause I didn't want to cause you pain. At the age of thirteen I became a man. You did the best you could momma. For you I sing this song.

Mom I'm sorry I couldn't make it to your funeral in nineteen, ninety. I caught a case and was doing time. It was eight months before I found out you died. I cried feeling so much pain and misery inside. Even though I know you're in a better place, I didn't stop the tears from running down my face. I love you and miss you mom. Since you've been gone, I feel alone. You were more than a mom. You were my best friend.

Dear mom I sing this song for you and all the things we use to do. To bring us kid's joy and happiness. Momma you've always been the best.

I love you momma for a fact. If I could bring you back, but I know that's impossible. On day I'll join you, my beloved momma Sally Wilson. God knows I truly miss you. Even though you're not my biological mom, you're my grandma, the only mom I knew. And I truly miss and love you, more than anything in this world. You're my old girl. I know you're in a better place and I love you. That's why I sing this song for you. It's all I can do.

The World We Live In

Hitler coined the world's new world order
 America is accomplishing it by using the law
 Keeping the minority in cages
 Nothing less than modern day slavery.
 It doesn't matter if you're white, black, blue, or green
 Department of corrections is a moneymaking machine.

Y.A. it's all about that almighty dollar bill
 Our nation even allow whole sale killing, calling it war,
 And war is a very sad story
 Men killing men seeking glory.
 Crime rates are going up, murder and rape
 While jealousy continues to generate hate.
 Even amongst rich politicians,
 Making false promises of how they're going to better the
 conditions. While millions are confined to cages
 Being controlled by chemical agencies.
 Experimental drugs
 Makes you wonder, where it the love.

They call it rehabilitation
 Department of corrections only breed's hate.
 With a heart full of hate and grief
 You'll soon be released seeking revenge
 For all the suffering and pain you went through while in
 the pen.
 Not even caring where the madness might end.
 Over the years you've lost family, friends and loved ones to
 the grave, causing you to build rage
 Going crazy.
 Now you want to strike out at something or somebody
 'Cause of all the suffering and pain built up inside.
 So you blame it all on the decisions of society.

Hitler coined the world's new world order
 America is accomplishing it by using the law
 Keeping the minority in cages
 Nothing less than modern day slavery.
 It doesn't matter if you're white, black, blue, or green
 Department of corrections is a moneymaking machine.

Millions are selecting our great leaders, who's main focus
 is greed.

The rich getting richer, while the poor gets poorer.
 At a very young age, young girls become street whores,
 While young boys become drug dealers
 And gangsters become terrorist killers.
 Millions become homeless without jobs
 While the little one's struggle to keep from starving.
 Only to find them selves in a early grave
 Or a cold lonely prison cell. This it the world we live in
 Where the corruption has no end.

Ya I sing this song for all race's and nations
 Different towns and places.
 Everywhere you go it's the same
 Drugs, hate, prostitution, and gang-banging.
 Nobody wants to face the truth
 Look at all the violence and corruption in the hood.

Hitler coined the world's new world order
 America is accomplishing it by using the law
 Keeping the minority in cages
 Nothing less than modern day slavery.
 It doesn't matter if you're white, black, blue, or green
 Department of corrections is a moneymaking machine.
 Ya that's real, it's the worlds we live in!

My Tragic Hero

There's a pain built up in my chest,
 This awful feeling I can't put to rest.

You are but humble,
 But you get so overwhelmed you can't help but to
 stumble.

This sick tragedy has struck fear into my heart,
 It adds a bitter taste as dull as a flavorless tart.

There also seems to be another downfall,
 Fore, in this situation there is a tragic flaw.

I can't help but to let it get the best of me,
 It won't let me stay still, it won't let me be.

I am no mere plaything for the gods to use,
 To be their little puppet on a string is something that I
 refuse.

I am the helpless victim of someone else's fate,
 I'm trapped dancing in circles at such an alarming rate.

You are the Jekyll to my Hide,
 When I am unsure it is in you that I confide.

CHEYENNE DANIELS

Sent to us via email and writing as a "free" bee, we are proud to
 introduce this next young woman. This is what she said about the
 poem she sent us. "It was my sophomore year of high school when I
 wrote this poem. We were in the middle of reading Romeo and Juliet
 and I saw a few lines that intrigued me. At that time in my personal
 life though, my boyfriend and I were going through a rough patch. So,
 I tried to tie the masterful works of the famous William Shakespeare
 into one of the many poems that intertwine with my hum-drum life." We
 really enjoy her commentaries on life and would love for her to send
 us more.

The
 Beat

Our Souls Can Now Rest

Not a moment too soon, not a moment too late,
 God answers the prayers that are offered in faith.
 For if in our hearts we truly believe,
 In the fullness of time we shall surely receive.
 Sometimes he surprises and answers at once,
 Sometimes we must wait for weeks, perhaps months.
 But god in his wisdom hears when we pray,
 And he will answer in his own divine way.
 Not always the way we hope or accept,
 Not always the path we ourselves would select.
 But God who is faithful knows what is best,
 Off blessed assurance our souls can now rest.
 (Written by Michielle Langdon with permission)

What a way to end a Beat Without section. This next writer is definitely an all-star because after reading his poem to his daughter we broke into tears. Seriously... And it takes a very talented person to be able to convey such emotion with simple paper and pencil. An art that's been around since before all of us can remember and we're refreshed to know the people are still using the power of writing to teach and to allow others to feel what they're feeling. It is such a beautiful thing... He also sends us a poem asking the question, "Where Did I Go Wrong?" and a poem that was written by his ex-wife that he's publishing with her permission. But we were definitely blown away by the poem to his daughter and we hope he'll drop some more on us soon. We're anticipating being able to be captivated once again... Thank you...

*It's the father looking back at me
 Waiting, watching, hoping,
 loving, patiently*

Who I Am

I could have been something great
 Instead I'm just another number in the chain gang
 I really had potential
 Now I'm just another name in the obituary column
 Another John Doe on a slab in the city Morgue
 Where did I go wrong?
 What exit did I miss?
 I have tried all things
 Ups, downs, highs, lows — hoes?
 Yes I've tried some of those
 But why do I cry inside?
 Why does my soul cry out?
 "I want I want"
 I fill me with all I see
 Oh God I might O.D
 But it's useless
 What's missing from me?
 I look around and see poverty
 But I also see joy
 And I want!
 Why can't I be free?
 What happened to me?
 I could have been a great friend, and artist, a poet, a
 brother
 A mother, a father, a great lover, a hero, a warrior a
 success

But here I am
 Oh God where did I go wrong?
 I guess I should've listened to all these people who warned
 me about people like me
 But now?
 I have found hope from all the coke, no joke
 The booze, the rocks, the dudes, the cops
 I can now escape
 I must look up
 What do I see?
 It's the father looking back at me
 Waiting, watching, hoping, loving, patiently
 Come to me my son and I'll set you free
 No more worries no more cares
 His love he shares with me
 So if you are me
 And don't like what you see
 You're looking in the wrong direction
 Be strong!
 Hold on!
 Don't burn out!
 Don't cry!
 Don't die!
 Just follow me
 And God will set you free
 It's all been a bad dream, a strange trip
 Where did I go wrong?

The Truth

I saw a little girl today,
 And realized what I gave away,
 The laughs, the joys, the love, the hugs,
 I gave away because of drugs.

My little girl is growing fast
 Five years have now gone in the past
 There is no way to turn back time
 And I gave it up for just one dime

All I ever wanted was a beautiful wife,
 And a little child to share my life
 All of the pieces fell into place,
 Then I messed it up like a disgrace.

I'll never forget when she entered this world
 The cutest squirmly baby girl

I held her snugly in my arms
 She looked up at me with all her charm
 I was so proud that blessed day
 But then I gave it all away

December 1st 1995
 She entered the world so vibrant and alive
 I was so proud to be her dad
 Why oh why did it turn out so bad?

I'll never forget her first baby steps
 Or how she'd fall asleep on my chest
 Or the first time she spoke my name
 Then I screwed it up, no one else to blame

I meant to give her all I never had
 A stable home, a mom and a dad
 For two years everything went great
 But I guess I put too much on my plate

I thought I could conquer the world
 But when the pressure came I became uncured
 I ran to the only relief I knew
 I destroyed myself and destroyed her too.

For two years I went on the run
 Using coke and heroin, trying to have fun
 But really I was trying to erase the pain
 I couldn't face myself, and all the shame

Then came the day that I checked in
 To a detox center to try again
 My daughter reentered my life
 And some how I hung on to my wife
 In Maine we spent the next two years
 We were so happy, no time for tears
 We camped in that summer, in winter, skated on ice
 These times together were really nice

Then we decided to move back home
 Back to Miami, my danger zone
 Then came the day that I got high
 I threw it all away, my second try

My family had enough of me
 They felt my daughter deserved better, you see
 But me, I thought I had better plans
 I broke in my mom's house, ripped my daughter from her hands

I went to court for burglary and kidnapping and was threatened with life
 I pled out to a year with probation and lost my wife
 The year was hard but I pulled through
 I walked out the door and started over new,

My family gave me another chance
 And placed my daughter back in my hands
 This time, I quickly fell on my face
 Took my daughter on the run all over the place
 We ended up in dope holes and seedy motels
 I drug my sweet angel through all kinds of hell

One day I woke up and she was gone
 And I was left all alone
 October 1st 2001
 Was the last time I saw my precious one
 Since then I've been out and then back in
 This time they gave me a fresh ten
 It's now been 5 years since I've seen her or heard her voice

But I guess I made my own choice
 I'm sorry I never said goodbye
 I'm sorry Nicole that I made you cry
 I wish I'd been a stronger dad
 I wish I hadn't done things so bad

I saw a little girl today
 And realized what I gave away

LIONEL HARRIS

Wrong Impression

Racism or their own fault...

It's been a little over thirty years since segregation has been lifted and there's a growing impression that black people have done little to take advantage of that. Some say that they've been given special breaks and have blown it every time. Others believe blacks don't want an even playing field, they want their turn on top. It is these wrong impressions alone that are leading more and more whites to resent blacks, not the old ideas of superiority.

Think about it.

White people look at the Irish, the Jews, the Vietnamese and then say, "What's the problem with the blacks?" (Well, most don't say it out loud, but they're thinking it.) "All the other groups - Irish, Italians, Chinese, whatever - may have come here destitute, but they eventually pulled themselves up. Why are the blacks different?"

They're different because all those other groups brought one thing along with them, their sense of self. They stayed together in the cities and on the plains. They maintained their cultural identities - religions, customs, names - until they were secure enough to assimilate. Blacks had no chance to do that. They were stolen from their country, beaten, raped, brought here in chains and sold as property. Their families were split, their religions outlawed and their names changed. Nothing was left. No identity. No direction. And they've never recovered.

The only other group with remotely similar circumstances are the American Indians. But the Indians plight was in the reverse. They weren't stolen from their land, their land was stolen from them. They too, had their culture systematically destroyed. They've never recovered either, despite a whole host of government programs to help them.

This supports the long-held belief that if you don't know who you are or where you come from, you can't find your way forward. Of course there are exceptions, bright spots, success

Writing from the Madison Correctional Institution in London, Ohio, we give you a man who really pulls our societal coat tails with this next piece, titled "Wrong Impression." He speaks about the wrong impressions our country gets of Black people. And he also breaks down to us why he thinks this is so. Unfortunately he didn't have any solutions, but it's okay because he stated the problem brilliantly and we don't think anyone will take offense to this because of the way he expresses himself. We hope he comes up with a solution and puts it into place because we're pretty tired of how things are going in the great U.S. ourselves. Thank you for your insights...

stories. But the point is that whites don't look at blacks in the right perspective. They look at blacks like they're an immigrant group that can't get their shhh together. When in all actuality, that's not the case.

When I've tried explaining that whites have the wrong impression of blacks, white and black people alike tend to look at me the way my dog does when I switch a ball from one hand to the other. Then I try another approach. I suggest that racism is not the primary reason for the high failure rate of African Americans. It could be a simple lack of making education a priority in their communities. That's when people look at me like I opened my hands and the ball has magically disappeared.

Then I get it.

They assume I'm making excuses for all saggy-pants-wearing, no-job-having, child-support-owing black criminal suspects that fill our nightly news. (For the record: as an African American "nobody" and because of America's double standard, I can describe black suspects without fear of losing my job and I don't even have to go beg Reverend Sharpton or Jessie or any of the other race-hustlers for forgiveness.)

And just so we're clear, I'm not attempting to defend their criminal behavior, criminals - black or white - are on their own. And I also don't propose to have a simple solution to such a complex problem. I'm just an ordinary man who believes that white America continues to have the wrong impression of black America and I wanted to tell someone about it...

*October 1st 2001
Was the last time I saw my precious one
Since then I've been out and then back in
This time they gave me a fresh ten
It's now been 5 years
since I've seen her or heard her voice*

read the rest of Simon Langdon's BWO piece on page 79

